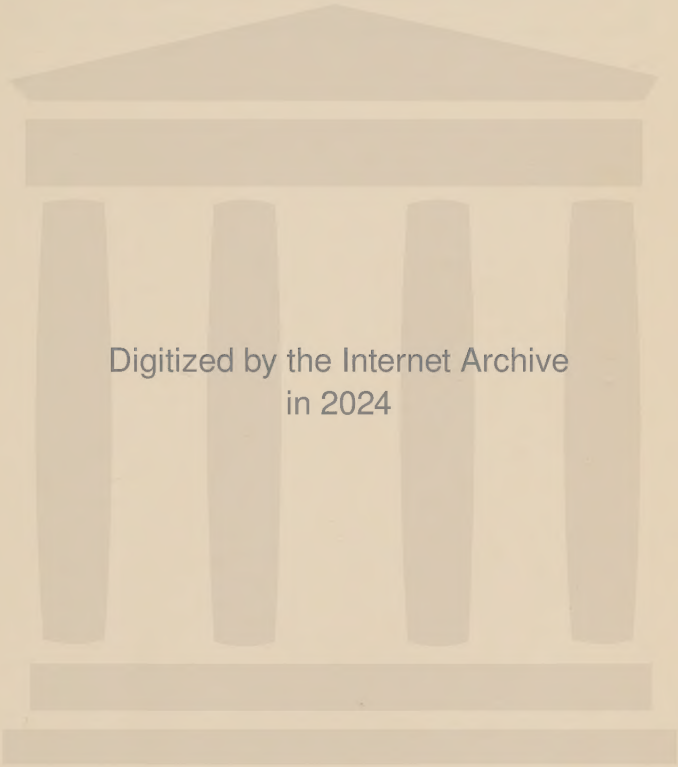
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ALGER

A Biography Without A Hero



ALGER

A Biography Without A Hero

By

HERBERT R. MAYES



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TO

MY MOTHER

29372

FOREWORD

It would be crass in me not to set forth the chief sources of my data. Therefore, for valuable assistance, I acknowledge my indebtedness to more than a score of postmasters in the state of Massachusetts; to Henry G. Alger; Mrs. Frank A. Hoppe; William Lewis Butcher, superintendent of the Newsboys' Lodging House in New York; Henry W. Ralston, general manager of Street & Smith; George C. Fairbanks, publisher of the Natick (Mass.) *Bulletin;* Ed Stratemeyer; Ernest Coulter, general manager of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children; James F. Bigelow, historian of Marlborough, Mass.; G. G. Benedict, of the staff of Harvard College; and G. W. Robinson, secretary of the graduate school of Harvard College.

Foremost among the books I have consulted are these: *Recollections of a New York Chief of Police,* by George W. Walling; *History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850, Vol. VII,* by James Ford Rhodes; *History of Natick, Mass.,* by O. N. Bacon; *The American Metropolis,* by Frank Moss; *Our Police Protectors,* by A. E. Costello; *Manual of American Literature,* edited by Theodore Stanton; *The Turn of the Century,* by Mark Sullivan; *New York in the Elegant Eighties,* by Henry Collins Brown. I have also had access to the files of many newspapers in Boston and New York, to the records of several New England historical societies, and to the library of the Harvard Club, in New York.

H. R. M.

New York, December 23, 1927

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Let Us Pray	13
II.	Patience—the Name of a Girl	31
III.	Literature Preferred	50
IV.	Genius Has Prerogatives	69
V.	Almost in a War	84
VI.	Wing—the Name of a Boy	99
VII.	City Chores	112
VIII.	Crusade	131
IX.	Greeley Speaks His Piece	149
X.	Escapade	166
XI.	The Man Who Wrote a Book	183
XII.	The List Grows Longer	196
XIII.	Patience—the Name of a Virtue	231
XIV.	Books Written by Horatio Alger, Jr.	239

ALGER

A Biography Without A Hero

I
LET US PRAY

The senior Horatio Alger held one especial grievance against his wife. In doing things, he complained, she was always too late or too early. For such an important matter as bearing a first child he thought she might have altered her habits, but the poor woman ran true to form and never was fully pardoned for her tactlessness. She gave birth to the young Horatio on Friday the thirteenth of January in the year 1832. It was on Friday, the thirteenth of some month in some forgotten year that her husband had accidentally gashed his cheek with a razor, and the scar that resulted was a perpetual reminder of the date's ill omen. Had she exercised more will power and given up the boy a day sooner, or more self-control and carried him a day longer, she would have performed what was no more than her simple Christian duty.

To make matters worse, the boy was born at night, the very night which was set aside each week by Mr. Alger for preparation of the coming Sunday's sermon. The concomitant hullabaloo: Dr. Thomas Samuel tramping through the rooms growling for water and

bandages, and Nurse Sarah Morse responding to all commands with noisy footsteps and raucous voice, to say nothing of the low pitched moans emanating from the bedroom of the mother-to-be, had a devastating effect on the work Mr. Alger was struggling to complete. Fortunately for Olive Fenno—the woman's maiden name—she bore a boy. What the consequences might have been had the issue of all the tumult been a girl, no one may say. Mr. Alger was set on a boy; he had, in fact, lustily prayed for a boy. The appearance of a girl would have been, at the least, sacrilegious.

Although he was only twenty-six at the time of his son's arrival, Mr. Alger for three years had been pastor of the Unitarian Society at Chelsea, Massachusetts, a town some few miles north of his own homestead in Revere. And how he pastored! He was a blue law by himself, diagnosing as sinful every human activity conducive to enjoyment, and as a remedy prescribing religion in generous hunks. His mission on earth, he avowed, was the salvation of souls, and even before his marriage he seems to have decided in favor of keeping it strictly a family affair. Among his friends were ministers of other congregations, but he never lost an opportunity to disparage their ability or good intentions. Interlopers, they; mere pretenders; not frauds, precisely, but not exactly genuine, either. As for him—he was all pulpit and a churchyard wide, oozing with gospel, every cubic inch of him stuffed with a juicy prayer. From the standpoint of godliness he was formidable enough to keep this world and the next safe for St. Peter. In-

deed, his was a carefully conceived plan, nurtured from youth through a ripe old age, to assume the spiritual leadership of America, an undertaking which, generously enough, was to be shared by a son of his begetting. He never was reconciled to the influence of Henry Ward Beecher.

His father was ambitious, in a spiritual way, for himself and son; nothing else and none others mattered. With a cocksure swagger that smacked of an intimate, personal partnership with God, he walked; tall, straight, thin; with a long fine nose—distended, sniffling nostrils; and cheeks puffed in instead of out; and big ears—big ears with a roving manner, always twitching when his eyebrows rose. And he was pale of countenance, with cold blue eyes, and a mouth that opened wide to let tiny words emerge, like a big gate opening for a poodle to trot through. Prayer book tightly clasped against his bosom, he hurried now to church and now to the home of an ailing parishioner. God knew, and he knew, and he spoke for both. He possessed his preachership, and showed it off, as though it were a new tool he designed, or a champion colt just bought with the highest bid at the county fair.

The minister forwarded a letter to Peter Forstman, a boyhood comrade then residing in Chicago, announcing his assumption of the rôle of father. "The boy has arrived as I expected," he wrote modestly. "It was a *strenuous ordeal* and I am earnestly trying to accommodate myself to the new order of things. Needless to say my work has *suffered* enormously and some months will

elapse before all is normal again. His name will be Horatio, after me, not as a concession to any vanity of mine but rather as a reminder to him that I shall expect him to continue the religious endeavors I have begun but in a *larger, broader* manner."

Four more children joined the Alger family during the ensuing decade. Olive Augusta followed Horatio, Jr., in a year, and after her came James, Ann and Francis. One of Mr. Alger's firm convictions was that the country needed more native stock and he was nothing if not patriotic. However, once he performed his duty, it devolved on his complacent wife to proceed with the good work and raise the children to maturity. Aside from Horatio, Jr., they never mattered much to Mr. Alger. He was a provider but in no other sense of the word a parent. To young Horatio alone he gave everything he had. He cherished him, nurtured him, taught, guided, and counseled him. And the result was not another Horatio but the same Horatio beginning life over again.

At the outset the boy was dull. His sister Olive learned to talk before he did, a circumstance which delighted Mrs. Alger immensely and infuriated her husband. Not to be discouraged, Mr. Alger doubled and redoubled his efforts at instruction. He crooned hymns to the boy and related stories from the Bible. He coaxed, cajoled and confounded. The response was not what he anticipated; but at last he detected a modicum of progress and resolved to wait. Nurse Sarah, now retained as governess, ventured to suggest that

fairy tales were more appropriate for a child than harangues on theology. For her impudence she was instantly dismissed, an incident she accepted without regret, since she declared she had been hired to raise a child and not a cathedral.

By the time he was eight Horatio was rounding into form and to a large extent fulfilling his father's expectations. He could explain the part Lafayette played in winning the Revolutionary War, give the boundaries of Germany, spell twelve-letter words, add fractions in his head, and write the synopsis for a sermon. He had not heard of Hans Andersen, but parts of Plato's *Republic* and almost all the works of the Jewish historian Josephus he had read; before he was nine he acquired a knowledge of Latin. Texts from the Bible, many of them, he knew by heart and could and would recite them at the parent's command. His one great failing was speech. He stuttered. As the years went by this impediment disappeared but he failed ever to appear wholly at ease while speaking. In college days his first desperate attempts at recitation went by the name of *horations*.

Until he was seven he had mute companions—only colored, wooden blocks—to play with. Yet the little mind, already impinged upon by ministerial data, found solace in those hours when, alone, he could squat upon the floor and build. Some children work miracles with blocks. They raise bridges in an hour, and tunnels, even palaces and forts. Horatio specialized in towers. Over and over he built a tower of the same design, antici-

pating always a structure that would stand straight and proud, higher than his head, an impressive architecture. When the tower crumbled to the floor before its tall destiny was accomplished, the boy would gather the scattered segments and begin again, uncomplainingly.

In the district school which he attended the boy was often brilliant. As often he was stupid. With an inexorable persistency came days when his hard earned knowledge deserted him, when his mind became a blank, and in the midst of a lesson he would sit with a vacant stare, totally at a loss to understand what was going on about him, thoroughly abashed. Once, called upon to answer a question, he rose from his stool, shaky and white, and stood for an agonizing interval without speaking. "Come, Horatio, you know that." A wan smile quivered on his lips. "I know I know," he murmured, "but it's just that I can't remember." He grew afraid of these lapses of memory which stole upon him unawares and left him at the mercy of an invisible but none the less dreadful enemy. Imbued at that early age with a sense of his responsibility to the world, he was terrified to think himself incapable or unworthy. Immediately following such a mortifying experience he would pack his books and hurry home to cry—but only when he could be alone with his mother.

After the first few years Mrs. Alger had been made to feel that no part of this first-born belonged to her. As he grew older her love asserted itself, but not openly; she saw less of him than of the other children but her heart went out to him more and, clandestinely, he recip-

rocated the affection. When her husband was away on church business in New York or Boston, or going the rounds of his parish, she took the boy to herself and by her gentle bearing and numerous embraces made him understand the extent of her devotion. "Now you may sit on my lap," she said. He would climb up and nestle his head on her shoulder, putting his skinny arms around her, holding tight; and sometimes, out of a mutual mingling of joy and misery, their tears would drop together on her black, woolen dress. Those occasions, however, were not frequent; chiefly she was compelled to fondle him at a distance. Friends who knew the suffering woman pitied her for the low place she held in her home. The man who had married her also moulded her, and he moulded her skimpily. In all things great and small his word was law. As on the day their cottage burned, and she attempted to enter the lower floor, which the flames had not yet reached, to fetch her sewing basket, a treasured heirloom. He ordered her back, saying it was the will of God that all should be destroyed. And the basket burned.

Mr. Alger dressed his boy in dignity and was proud to see him stand, as he supposed, aloof from other children of his age. In reality it was the children who sedulously avoided him when play time came. They were not favorably impressed with his grave demeanor or the immaculate clothes in which, even for interludes of leisure, he inevitably appeared. They teased him, mocked him, made him the butt of pranks, and called him Holy Horatio. Yet all the while the staid child

wanted to mingle with them. He yearned to run a race and climb a tree and dig a hole. But he dared not, for fear his father might be watching from the window of his study. On one autumnal day a group of youngsters, organized for mischief, surrounded him and initiated a game of settlers and Indians. They were the settlers and he was the Indians. Alternately they poked at him with sticks and jostled him up and down the walk, intent on seeing him finally reduced to tears. Certainly resistance was the last thing they expected and when he turned suddenly and fought, all of them with one exception fled, and on him who remained Horatio wreaked an almost insatiable vengeance. The victory, for all its momentary sweetness, was a hollow one. His father accidentally came upon the battle scene and took him home to a longer period of prayer and study. "Forgive them," he adjured, "for they know not what they do." Readily enough Horatio agreed they knew not what they did, but forgiveness he withheld; after more prayers he also conceded forgiveness.

"What are you going to be, Horatio? Explain to the gentleman what you intend to be." Thus would Horatio, Jr. be addressed by his sire when an acquaintance came to visit at the house. The lad would bring his heels together, straighten his skinny body, bend his head on one side and very solemnly aver: "I shall be a teacher of the ways of God, a preacher of His commandments, a liberal thinker, a loyal citizen."

"What are you going to be, Horatio? Tell mother what you *want* to be." Thus spake Mrs. Alger to the



Cover for an Alger opus:
Nelson, the Newsboy
or, Afloat in New York

boy when she saw him sprawled over his books, his eyes scanning the pages but his ears cocked for the fringes of other children's laughter which the summer breeze brought in. The youngster's timid eyes would meet his mother's. "I don't want to be anything, mother, honest, I *don't.*" He told the truth to her because she pitied him, yet she never did really understand. She was afraid to raise her voice in protest to her man—something of the fanatic in the soul of this preacher-husband bade her hold her tongue and leave the boy exclusively to him. This was his soft clay, his attitude declared, and he would shape it in the image of himself. . . . While he prepared his lengthy sermons he caused Horatio to sit beside him and watch over his shoulder as he wrote. He rehearsed his sermons before the boy and directed him to write résumés of what he remembered. Breakfast and supper each day were served to them alone—the rest of the family ate before or after, as they chose. He went on long walks into the country and had the child trudge along at his side and when, before returning, they sat beneath a tree to rest, Horatio would be examined in the scriptures.

On Sundays he squatted in the buggy beside his father and made the tedious journey to the church at Chelsea where, in the first row, a pew for him was reserved—a vantage point from which he could hear every word and make note of every gesture. After the ceremony he would stand forlornly on the steps of the church and listen to the chatter of the townspeople as they gathered round his father and shook his hand. These

townspeople praised the boy for his attention, lauded his manliness and predicted an extraordinary future.

Toward the end of one autumn Horatio exhibited signs of illness. Dr. Samuel came, and, pronouncing it a case of diphtheria, held out slight hope for recovery. Here Mrs. Alger stepped in and resolved that at all costs the boy should live. She became his nurse, scarcely ever left the bedside, cared for him night and day. Even her husband was reluctant to interfere. For a time she was transformed into a different woman, endowed with an impetuous spirit to which the emergency suddenly gave rise. Her authority was not to be questioned or denied. But with the crisis over she quietly slipped back to the unresisting tenor of her way. Once more Mr. Alger grasped the reins and drove her from the scene. There was, however, a noticeable temporary slackening in the pace the minister set. Warned by the physician that over-work would induce a relapse and certainly fatal consequences, he relinquished to a slight degree, but only for an interval, the vicious grip in which the child was held. Now and then Horatio was permitted to play with other boys and as a special concession during the winter he was privileged to participate in the building of a snow man. In this structural process the clergyman observed an opportunity for pointing an important moral and he was not one to let the chance go by. When the sun shone again and the snow man melted, Mr. Alger discoursed on the permanency of the instruments of God and the ephemeral quality of all of the works of man.

About this time Peter Forstman was favored with another missive from Mr. Alger in which he learned that "Horatio, Jr. has fallen a prey to the diphtheria." "I cannot begin to tell you what anguish I endured." the churchman wrote, "as I witnessed the little body wasting away from fever. God be thanked that he has survived and is once again on the road to sturdy health. I forbid myself to think what I would do without the lad. So far I have devoted my existence to his upbringing and the progress he has made in his studies has been *gratifying* to an infinite degree. God willing, some day he will be a credit to His name."

Shortly after his thirteenth birthday Horatio completed his first story for publication. It was printed in the news columns of the local *Gazette* and received this comment from his father in a letter to Grace Treadwell, a resident of Boston who several times had been a guest at the Alger home: "Olive and the children are in excellent health and wish to be remembered to you. In a community as small as ours nothing occurs to disturb the tranquillity of our lives and I am without the means therefore of informing you of any events of extraordinary significance. Were I to pass by a *certain small occurrence,* however, I would not be doing justice to my oldest boy whose diligence in study has already won recognition from our weekly press. He has developed a *flair for writing* which is most remarkable for his years, and this without an iota of instruction or advice from anyone. I must ask you to pardon my enthusiasm, if it seems such to you, for I am *very proud*

of his accomplishment and look forward with eagerness to his further achievements."

The story in the *Gazette* was prefaced by the announcement that "the editor deems it an honor to publish in the columns of this journal a tale written by a child of our community who has not yet celebrated his fourteenth birthday. Horatio Alger, Jr. is the author of an entertaining piece entitled, A Race Up the Hill, which, through the generosity of his esteemed father, we are privileged to present to our numerous readers."

Then follows the tale:

A boy was waiting at the bottom of a hill for some one to come and play with him. Soon he heard whistling and was happy because he thought a friend of his was coming. The whistling came from the wind which was blowing about the fields and at first the boy was ready to weep because he had no one to play with. The wind kept whistling and the whistle seemed to say, "Come, little boy, *I* will play with you." The boy listened hard and was sure he heard the words. This new companion made him full of joy even if he could not see it.

So he jumped about and ran merrily about the trees with the wind singing and chasing after him. The fact that the boy ran ahead of the wind pleased him very much. He was proud aud challenged the wind to a race up hill.

"Well, well," cried the wind, "let us start."

The boy ran as fast as he could run. The wind was close behind him. "I win," said the boy as he stopped. "I beat the wind." The wind grew angry at hearing the boast and whistled by him and did not come back to play.

"The moral of the narrative," gloated Mr. Alger in later correspondence with Peter Forstman, "is readily

discernible. It is in reality a sermon which says, 'Thou shall not set thyself against the word of the Lord." That the boy had any such moral in mind when writing the piece seems, of course, a far-fetched notion. On the contrary, it may be set down as the first tangible expression of the desire to write—not sermons, but stories—which stayed with him through life.

The noble significance which the elder Alger read into the lines earned for the boy a material though unwelcome reward. His father journeyed purposely to Boston to have tailored for him a ministerial garb, in miniature, in imitation of his own. This he expected Horatio to wear on the Sabbath. But Horatio rebelled with sufficient vehemence to have his way, and the suit was never worn except in play, and then by his brother James. What Mr. Alger, with all his churchly erudition, forgot, was that even the Christ child was not forbidden to smile.

From this time on the boy discovered the efficacy of occasional resistance. A series of domestic skirmishes ensued between father and son in which the latter, impregnated with a new ardor, was not always unsuccessful. Ever since his eleventh birthday the boy had been required to spend half an hour every morning in solitary meditation. The subjects of his meditations are not known, since he was not compelled by his parent to disclose them and never of his own volition vouchsafed the information. Nevertheless, from the fragmentary reports available we may be sure those thirty-minute stretches were little better than compulsory imprison-

ments productive of much speculation on why one had to endure unending tribulations in order to find favor with one's God. The devil had his inning when Horatio conceived the idea of bringing a companion to the study to help pass away the time. Duff, a cat to which his sister Ann asserted proprietary rights, was prevailed upon to accompany Horatio in his profundities. By rolling a spool of cotton along the floor Horatio found he could rouse the cat to passionate energy. This became a regular procedure until Mr. Alger entered one day to investigate the commotion. He gave vent to his anger by barring the cat not only from the study but also from the household. Banishment for the innocent feline was unthinkable and Horatio said so. When he threatened to leave home and follow the cat the edict was modified to exclude the animal only from the room.

Another incident occurred at this period which caused Mr. Alger to realize he was unable to control his son to the same full extent as before. Heeding Dr. Samuel's advice to allow the boy a reasonable amount of exercise, he had a swing set up in the garden behind the house. At first Horatio was delighted with the prospect, but soon he found that this form of entertainment made him ill. Vomiting spells succeeded each session on the swing and he made up his mind to forego the pleasure permanently. In this decision Mr. Alger refused to concur. It was, he proclaimed, as good a method as any for keeping one's stomach clear and he considered objections unreasonable. Here once more the boy attained a victory. He appealed to his mother. His mother con-

sulted Dr. Samuel. Dr. Samuel delivered an ultimatum and the swing came down.

He was fourteen and exhibiting further symptoms of waywardness when Frederick Winslow Wilson arrived to discuss the details of his future education. Wilson was then assistant headmaster at Gates Academy, in Marlborough. He offered to take the boy to board with him, enroll him in the school and properly equip him for admission to Harvard, and at the same time keep a watchful eye upon his movements. Mr. Alger treated the boy's departure with ostentatious unconcern but it affected him deeply. Thus, he promptly dispatched to Mr. Wilson a letter in which he wanted to be assured that "the boy is in a congenial atmosphere and happy. I hold the belief," he wrote, "that the environment of an educational institution should simulate that which the students are accustomed to at home as closely as practicable. I hope and believe Horatio will find under your jurisdiction all the comforts he has had in the past. Again I urge you to communicate with me instantly if he fails to accommodate himself to the new regimen. I am *utterly concerned* with his well-being."

This was the boy Horatio's first extended absence from home. In the class room he experienced no difficulties, only, in the beginning, his fellow students did not take to him. The air in which he moved appeared too rarefied for more normal boys to breathe. He sensed their latent hostility, resolving to wear it down and project himself into a social era. Whereupon he submitted complacently to an ordeal of hazing, and two weeks

after his enrollment loaned a classmate fifty cents. His stock rose appreciably. Long before the first term drew to a close he was admitted to all the councils, took part in all the games, conspired to break the windows in the home of Obadiah Albee, headmaster of the Academy, and when caught and threatened with expulsion for his share in the crime declined to name the other culprits; he never hesitated to let his friends copy their lessons from him or had scruples about reciprocal indulgences. He helped to build bonfires which threw the residents of Marlborough into a panic of fear. On a dare he swallowed a penny; on a double dare he swallowed two pennies. And when an Abolitionist stopped in the town long enough to deliver a lecture on the abomination of slavery, he assisted magnificently in inciting a riot though he and his youthful confederates were committed to anti-slavery doctrines.

All of which had a demoralizing effect on his father's peace of mind. Duties in the Chelsea parish prevented him from visiting the Academy as often as he wished and his pleas for moderation were conveyed in most instances via the post. There is nothing to prove that Horatio followed the receipt of each letter with an unusual burst of violence; on the other hand, there is nothing to prove he did not. Here in new surroundings he neglected altogether his study of the Bible. The daily half hours for meditation which he promised earnestly to observe were swept entirely from his mind, and religion became associated with an unpleasant but rapidly receding past. Instead of attending chapel on one

particular Sunday, he joined a group of comrades who had made elaborate plans for a picnic. The outing was dispersed by the sudden appearance of the instructors, who had been hastily organized for pursuit. More comprehensive plans were laid for a similar event to be held several Sundays later, but this time extra precautions were taken to preserve secrecy. In the meantime Mr. Wilson had advised Horatio's father of his delinquency. Two letters from home reached Horatio at the same time. The one from his father read:

"That a boy who has been the recipient of such profound attention as you should forget all the principles of honor and decency *distresses* me fearfully. Can it be you have no thought for the approval of your God nor for my desires? I must request you again with all the fervor at my command to forget the selfish impulses which come to you and think of living a life that will redound to the glory of God."

The second letter came from Mrs. Alger. "I am sorry," it said, "that Mr. Wilson has found grounds for complaint about your conduct. Perhaps there is some reason which I cannot understand, but I know that you will not resort to wickedness for its own sake. Try to be a better boy for I should be unhappy to think of you in trouble. I miss you more as the weeks go by. Think of me always as your affectionate mother."

Having pledged himself to the second excursion Horatio was intent on seeing it through, though he would gladly have resigned his part had a graceful way for so doing suggested itself. It was not the censure of

his father but the condoning spirit of his mother which sponsored his inclination. The appointed Sunday came and complete success greeted the boys' hopes for a secret departure. Only toward the middle of the afternoon, when the sky of a sudden was hidden from view by the onslaught of scowling storm clouds, were they assailed by any misgivings. Upon them with little warning a violent storm broke loose. Deafening claps of thunder afflicted the earth with palsy; the lightning snapped like a fiery whip, stinging the far off hills. The boys cowered together by the side of a brook and shut their eyes to the destruction being wrought about them. Then came at once a flash and a bolt and a tree nearby was torn from the earth and flung full length upon the field. One of the boys began to cry.

That, though he was to become a Unitarian minister, was the sincerest religious moment in Alger's life. He rose to his knees and turned his face to his comrades. "Come," he said, imperiously, "let us pray." They did pray—all but one scoffing youth. Him Horatio punched on the nose.

II

PATIENCE—THE NAME OF A GIRL

"I have made up my mind," Horatio said, "to marry Patience Stires."

His father said, "Then you are a fool."

"Marry and be happy," murmured his mother.

"How old are you?" the father asked.

"Nineteen."

"That is a ridiculous age."

"Old enough to know what love is," murmured his mother.

He went back to his senior class at Harvard and put in writing the words that he had spoken: "I have made up my mind to marry Patience Stires." After that he paused. To say more seemed useless and only could be a rephrasing of the thought; in the end it would mean the same. But he managed to add: "I am behind in my studies, father, and have even lost interest in French, my favorite study." The stillness of his room in Cambridge is broken, he thinks, by the voice of his parent: "You are too young!" He hastily writes, as if in direct

reply, "By this time I know my own feelings and have no doubt Patience is the only girl I will ever love." The pen moves fast across the paper as he endeavors to explain: "The world seems centered in her. I am only happy when I am with her. I could never forget her —not as long as I live. Some part of me would be missing."

Both predictions were to come true. He never forgot the girl; and, until the day he died, something in his make-up was missing.

In conversation his father referred to Patience Stires as "a chit scarce old enough to walk abroad alone, much less think of matrimony." But the elder Alger's estimate was wrong in this instance, as it was in many others, for Patience Stires never married, either.

The young man's letter, announcing the impending marriage, brought his father on a hurried visit to the college. What passed between the two can be surmised only from events which transpired later. Horatio, Sr. must have impressed upon his son his duty toward God. How could a man properly prepare himself for the ministry if he married before the age of twenty? Would not the necessity of earning a living for two compel him to seek a more remunerative occupation than the pulpit then afforded? He couldn't be a minister if he were going to be a husband, couldn't dedicate his life to religion. Unthinkable procedure indeed when Horatio, Sr., himself a member of the clergy, had sedulously planned for the boy a vocation in the service of Unitarianism.

"My father is convinced we ought to wait, my darling Patience," wrote Horatio. "That is not what I want to do even if the suggestion is sound. What is the value of love if lovers allow business to come between? I am ready to withstand the displeasure of my father if you are willing to be satisfied with the meager living I can earn because I suppose I will be a clergyman.

"Be sure to meet me on Sunday. I will wait for you in the regular way at Corsings at four o'clock and then we can go over our plans and make decisions for the future. Do not fail to be there because I shall be waiting, and leave you now, thinking of you in the meantime with the greatest love."

Patience, with the somber hazel eyes and alluring lips bounded by dimples! "I could never forget Patience as long as I live. Some part of me would be missing." To his father this was the preposterous chatter of a schoolboy. Had he seen the note his son dispatched he would likely have put him down for an incorrigible fool and washed his hands of him. The note, however, went on its way, unmolested, and Patience waited for Horatio at the appointed hour. She walked with him under the shade of the trees on a deserted street in Cambridge, and heard him declare anew his love and damn the idiosyncrasies of fathers. When she said good-by she knew it was good-by. She lied generously when she said of course they would be married but not right then—a little later on, when he took his B.A. and entered on theology. Thomas Alger, who deserted England for Taunton, Massachusetts, in 1665 and was the staunchest

churchman of that struggling British colony and the first of his line in America, must have gloated in his heavenly abode at the manner in which young Horatio was preserved intact for the ministry. It may even have been his spirit which directed the elder Alger's hand when he wrote to the Stires girl and said that a woman who truly loved would scarcely think of shattering the career of her loved one.

Of Patience we shall hear more later. Horatio heard of her again, but not from her. He never learned why. For a period he was inclined to credit his father's opinion of the instability of a young girl's affections. In a message home he wrote: "The young lady I hoped to marry seems to have changed her mind. At least I do not hear from her. I have been taught the meanness of being a hypocrite and the lesson comes in good stead now. I am obliged to speak honestly and say that I still feel the same way toward her. If she comes back I will surely ask her to be my wife. In the meantime I am devoting myself to study as much as possible. I am sure she will return and this makes it easier for me to do my work."

So sure was he that Patience would return that he studied doubly hard and at the end of the term stood head of his class in French.

"You did splendidly," his professor said, approvingly.

"Thank you," replied Horatio.

Then the professor smiled and went on: "I see the subject is very close to your heart."

A blush came to Horatio's cheeks. The French gram-

mar which he had been pressing to his heart he let fall upon his desk. "Yes, sir," he murmured, and a moment later, unobserved, he slipped from between its pages his photograph of Patience.

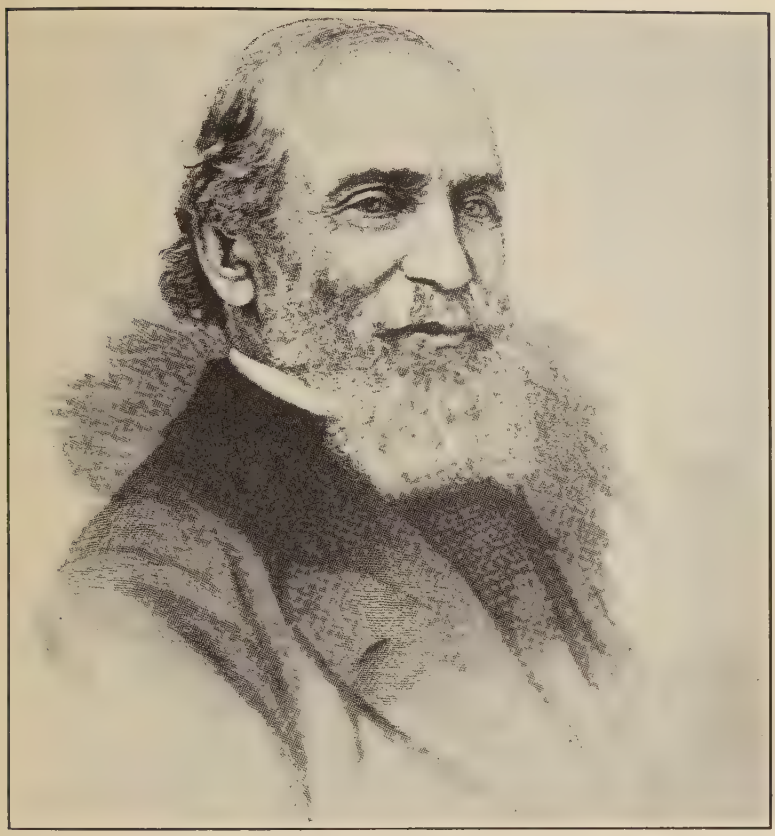
The star of young Horatio's destiny twinkled mischievously in the heavens throughout the course of his life. It beckoned him and urged him on, like an ambassador extraordinary from the God whose glory he ceased to preach when he gave his soul to literature and let the ministry go hang. The star hung high, and though he never lost sight of its luster he never grew tall enough to touch it with his hands. Somewhere inside him Alger may have had a beautiful story that was waiting to be told, but if he had, it lacked the warmth of a woman's body to give it form and substance, and died without having been born.

"It will not be long," he observed on one occasion to Robert Ammer, an acquaintance he had made at Cambridge, "before I get started on a novel that I hope will find a place in the company of fine writing." That was in 1871. Ten years later he wrote to his friend and former classmate Addison Brown, then serving a judgeship in New York: "I must separate myself from juvenile fiction long enough to write a lasting work. As soon as a suitable theme appears you may be certain I will seize it and permanently give up the line on which I have till now been engaged." And in 1899, as his emaciated body was stretched upon a bed in the home of his sister, Olive Cheney, he raised his head and vowed he would not die because there was a book he still had left

undone. Mrs. Cheney smoothed the pillow and tucked the blanket tighter under his chin. "You've written enough, Horatio," she said. And so, agreed the unsympathetic literati of the day, he had.

More than a hundred books were written by Horatio Alger, Jr. in the course of thirty years. The book he longed to write was not among them. Often as he walked the streets of the Bowery and sought for Tattered Toms and Rufus Rodmans to populate his stories, only his eyes were engaged in the pursuit. With his heart he was in search of inspiration. How he cried out at times for Patience! With her beside him the inspiration, he was sure, would forthwith come. Without her—without her it would come too, it could not help but come, but there would have to be time for the emptiness inside him to be filled. For she mattered, so very much she mattered!

"Ten years from now," predicted Horatio in a talk to a group of newsboys in 1880, when he was forty-eight, "most of you will be grown men. You will be working in stores, some of you, and some will be in banks and others in manufacturing establishments. Some of you may be doctors and lawyers. My little friend Howard here told me the other day he wanted to be a soldier. That is a laudable ambition too. George Washington was a soldier and so was our late president Mr. Lincoln. There is no telling how far you boys can go. But you have to work hard and study. If you spend your time going to amusements you won't get anywhere and I know you want to get somewhere. You



William T. Adams,
who wrote a lot of books, too

boys want to be respectable citizens, a credit to yourselves and to this great city. You want to have wives and children of your own. You want comfort in old age."

The knuckles of his hands showed white as he gripped tighter the table which stood before him.

"I want to tell you boys," he went on, "to keep thinking ahead to the day when you get married. Some of you have been fortunate enough to come from homes where happiness was plentiful even if worldly goods were not. Think what it means to have a happy home of your own! Now can you have a home like that without the right kind of wife? Of course not! Well, to get the right kind you have to deserve her. Yes, you must make yourselves worthy and deserving. You don't want to go on living all alone by yourselves. You want families, many boys and girls running around you and you will be their father, bringing them up in a wonderful way."

But the home life which he recommended to the boys he failed to acquire for himself. Nothing came, either then or later, to make Horatio Alger whole. His existence was one long striving for the chiding star, and his reach fell short.

It has been assumed that Alger wrote for boys because the effort afforded him a comfortable compensation. That is not true. Alger wrote books for boys because he could not write books for men. The implication is not that the author of juvenile fiction is in-

ferior, but that Alger was. Besides, boys interested him. He liked to be in their company. The greatest love in his life was his love for a boy, though Patience was first to cross his path and her influence therefore was greater. He did not write down to boys. He never had to for he never was above them. While waiting for a masterpiece it was necessary for him to be occupied. Doggedly, ofttimes with disgust, he did his stories, biding his time, cultivating his muse, eternally hoping.

Alger himself was the hero of every book he wrote. Local color, it is true, he secured at first hand—saw his characters and lived among them. It is true, too, that he describes in his tales the actual lives of some of the boys he met—up to a certain point. The boys are in his stories up to the point where they graduate from boot blacks and baggage smashers into quite noble creatures. At the place of transition Horatio steps in, usurps the hero rôle, and somewhere in the middle of the last chapter achieves the proper degree of fame and fortune. Thus did his subconscious control the destiny of his fiction.

Today people ridicule what Alger wrote and left behind him. Trash, they say. No carefully supervised lists for juveniles bear reference to his name. Teachers have sneered his books out of their class rooms. On August 7, 1907, the directors of the public library in Worcester, Massachusetts, banned his books from the shelves. Other libraries promptly adopted the same procedure. The public library commission in the Dis-

trict of Columbia includes them in the "horrible example" class. "His style," observed one critic, "is dull and unattractive. Of invention he has almost none. He loads his text heavily with preachments." Despite this condemnation Alger is a name better known than Dickens or Tolstoi or Balzac or Hawthorne. His name in America is better known than Shakespeare's, his writings more widely read. Some of his contemporaries acquired fame; he acquired popularity. Trash he wrote, undeniably, but men grown old remember with a sigh when they read him. It was part of Alger's mediocrity that he never should have realized the influence he had on the audience to which he catered.

The nation believed in him and hailed him as one who was directing its young citizenry along righteous paths. Without appreciating his power, he became powerful. Segregated for the most part in New York, it is understood why but a portion of his own fame came to his attention. In hamlets and towns and cities the name of Alger was revered. When public officials proved false to their trusts, the public said, "We should have men like Horatio Alger in office." To some it will seem ludicrous that a man so slightly endowed should have exerted an influence so gigantic. With his poor, cheap novels he exercised a sway which no writer in this country, before or since, has been able to equal. Nowadays, though more books are sold, people do not run for them. They accept books as they come, and get around to reading them, if not today, then tomorrow; if not to-

morrow, the day after—or perhaps not at all, though the book be the best of its kind that ever came to light. But Horatio Alger's books—for them the people ran because their children insisted. And every one of them was read. The majority of men who are living in the United States today have read something by Alger. His books were passed from hand to hand, were bought and borrowed and loaned. And it was considered an accomplishment to have gone through more of his books than your friend.

It is not his mediocrity which has kept the name of Alger in the minds of men, but the extent of it. All of which goes to indicate the ultimate effect of repetition. He narrated the identical story in over five-score volumes.

In fairness to Horatio Alger it must be said that he placed little value on the tales he wrote for boys. These he did, as has been intimated, to wile away hours that were devoid of inspiration. Now and then, however, inspiration seemed on the verge of coming, but usually it assumed the guise of poetry. There was, for instance, "Nothing to Do," to which he appended the sub-title "A Satirical Poem." Here he was able to rise to heights of tragedy. The poem relates the efforts of a man to acquire a fortune in order that his son may enjoy the benefit of reasonable leisure. The father dies of grief because his son becomes a parasite with Don Juan propensities. The mills of the gods are bound to do their grinding and toward the end of the poem Fritz Frivol, the villainous offspring,

" . . . appears
Like the elegant purse when deprived of its filling,
In fact, like the ginger-bread minus the gilding."

It must be pointed out in defense of the man that he intended the emphasis of the poem to be on the satire and not on the rhymes.

Somewhat closer to the end the inevitable moral creeps in and we learn that——

"E'en immaculate shirt-fronts, with diamond pins,
Cannot cover for ever a mountain of sins;
And so fell poor Fritz Frivol, so slowly, so sure,
He who once was a love, is now voted a bore."

On November 20, 1878, was celebrated the semi-centennial anniversary of the First Unitarian Church of South Natick, Massachusetts. This was a momentous event in the career of the elder Alger, who had been pastor of the church for fourteen years. He was anxious to have the commemoration appropriately observed and after mature consideration cast his decision in favor of an original hymn. Horatio, Jr. was impressed into service and to him the honor of writing the hymn was extended. Rev. S. W. Bush, head of a neighboring church at Needham, and a guest at the exercises, remarked after the singing that "all decorum was forgotten once the services were over while the men and women gave vent to their approval in the form of violent applause. The author himself was present and accepted the hearty testimonial in a becoming manner. He also

consented to speak briefly and expressed the hope of writing another piece fifty years hence which all present would be able to hear." The hymn was in four stanzas, of which this is the first:

> Eternal God, whose mighty power
> Controls the slowly circling spheres,
> And yet whose all-pervading love
> E'en in the humblest life appears,
> Thy people, shielded by Thy care,
> Have walked in peace these fifty years.

After the ceremony the Needham pastor offered Horatio his congratulations. "It's a long time since I have been concerned with verse," the author confided, "but I am satisfied with the outcome. Poetry has a great fascination for me. Later on I may do more of it." He was about to turn his attention to other friends who were waiting to greet him, when Mr. Bush ventured to ask a question. "You know," he said, "we really haven't walked in peace for fifty years. The Southern Rebellion, for example——." Alger met the criticism grandly. "Poetic license," he murmured, "poetic license." Along the lines of poetry there was very little more that Alger did. He returned to New York on November twenty-second and began *The Young Miner, or Tom Nelson Out West,* which he finished shortly after breakfast on Christmas Day.

William T. Adams more than any other person was responsible for Alger's concentration on stories for boys. Writing under the pseudonym of Oliver Optic, Adams

himself had established a substantial reputation as an author of juvenile fiction. In 1858 he was appointed associate editor of *Student & Schoolmate,* a monthly publication devoted to children and organized as the successor to *Forrester's Boys' and Girls' Magazine* to counteract the spreading influence of "dime novels". In 1865 he came into full editorial control and, having made the acquaintance of Alger while attending a service at the latter's church in Brewster, invited him to contribute an article to the magazine. Horatio responded with "Squire Pitman's Peaches," a dissertation on the futility of looting a man's orchard when all one had to do is ask and be given. This appeared in *Student & Schoolmate* for July, 1865, and was succeeded in September of the same year by "Deacon Baxter's Cow," another exhortation in the interest of good morals. These endeavors, according to the publisher's announcement, "have been extensively copied by the press, thus indicating Mr. Alger to be a favorite with the young folks." The statement was not much exaggerated. With two short articles he came to the forefront of writers for juveniles. So well pleased was Mr. Adams with Alger's ability to amuse his youthful clientele and so earnestly did he urge him to continue his efforts that he was able, a few months later, to exult over receipt of a new Alger manuscript which "will appear in the January, 1866, issue and run serially for a number of months thereafter."

"Your style is admirably suited to the taste of our young readers," Adams observed in a message to Alger.

"I am exceedingly delighted with the result of your first long story for us. It strikes the right chord and will be received with enthusiasm. Of that I am certain. Apparently you are blessed with an unusual knowledge of the boy mind. Chapter VIII is an inspired episode. The boys sound natural and nothing is of greater importance than this."

Inspired Chapter VIII of *Ragged Dick,* to which Adams referred, contains the following specimen of natural-sounding conversation. Frank Whitney, aged 13, is addressing Ragged Dick:

"You began in the right way when you determined never to steal, or do anything mean or dishonorable, however strongly tempted to do so. That will make people have confidence in you when they come to know you. But, in order to succeed well, you must manage to get as good an education as you can."

To which Dick soberly replies: "That's so. I never thought how awful ignorant I was till now." And Frank encourages him by observing simply, "That can be remedied with perseverance."

Adams called on Alger in New York and accompanied his contributor on a jaunt through some of the latter's hunting ground. He was much impressed by Alger's familiarity with the poverty-stricken sections of the city and the recognition accorded him by boys they passed on the way. "This is a fertile field," he told him, "and you ought to consider it your sacred duty to cultivate it." Alger was skeptical. "I have written you a story about it," he replied, "and there

doesn't seem to be much more to say. Besides, my plans call for a different kind of writing."

At great length the editor discoursed on the need of an historian who would record the tribulations of the poor. The eyes of the whole country, he averred, were centered on the metropolis, and while he admitted there were more than enough authors for adults he deplored the paucity of manuscripts for children. "Whatever you have to say about the boys in New York," he remarked, "will be read eagerly by boys in every State and Territory in the Union." A. K. Loring, a prominent publisher of Boston, he intimated, had already made discreet inquiries concerning the authorship of *Ragged Dick* and would not be averse to bringing it out in book form. "As a matter of fact," he told Alger, "I should not be surprised if you had a definite offer from him before long." By the time he was through, Adams had convinced his companion that a great future lay ahead of him and elicited a promise which would have put him in possession of Alger's next endeavor. Immediately after this interview Alger decided to continue the adventures of Ragged Dick in a volume entitled *Fame & Fortune*. Before its completion he fell under the influence of Mr. Loring and agreed to furnish that shrewd gentleman with the text for six additional books, all to be submitted within the space of twenty months.

A brief biographical notice of Alger, published in 1885, noted that "his eye is as clear and his cheeks as rosy at 50 as though he had always lived in the country

and dined daily on buttermlk". The biographer was somewhat in error. Or, because Alger never used liquor or tobacco in any form, it may have been a bit of propaganda indulged in by the agent for some total abstinence society. Horatio's eyes were always in the shadow of a cloud, seldom bright except in fever. Kind eyes yes, but keen eyes no. More the eyes of a dog than those of a man, beseeching, begging not to be hurt, seeking understanding. His cheeks were full and pale, and his scraggly brown hair grew far back on his head, giving him the appearance of semi-baldness. He was short in stature, his shoulders slightly stooped. A moustache concealed the thinness of his lips and the injured expression they assumed in their downward curve.

His dress was dull, drab, except on occasions when he ventured to address a gathering of youngsters at the Newsboys' Lodging House, and then he appeared immaculate and, so far as his neckwear went, bursting with color. With this gala attire he wished to indicate to the boys how they would look if they labored assiduously and refrained from pitching pennies.

These informal talks to boys represented happy moments in his life. Then was he able to dispose of the shyness which was his by nature and don a pose which suggested battle and a hearty willingness to conquer. During those moments he forgot that his inspiration had not yet come; believed, indeed, that he was all he ultimately hoped to be, and wildly waved his arms as a prerogative that associates with genius. Then, too, he could lift his voice out of its normal quavering pitch

and make it boom through the hall and resound like a self-made man's. This practice he discontinued in later years when his throat became weak and a spiteful cough refused to be medicined away.

His sympathy for children was vast; his charity kept him from growing rich. Frequently his generosity was misplaced. He gave where giving did no good, to wily urchins who knew how to stumble in his way and plead a fictitious hunger. Regardless of merit he opened his purse and shared what he had. In this respect he never ceased to practice the gospel he spent years at Cambridge Theological School to learn. In that one sense Alger never relinquished the ministry, though he resigned his pulpit and swore allegiance to a literary idol. For boys in particular his love was boundless and part of the slack inside him would have been taken up had there been an Horatio 3rd. Had Patience Stires become his wife . . .

"What a pity," he wrote in later years to his unofficial wife, Mrs. Garth, "that memories should persist. If we could do away with memories and start each day without recollections of what went before, wouldn't we be happier? I find that happy events have a way of being dissipated in the mere fact of living while unpleasantnesses haunt the mind and become a permanent part of one's being. If I could go to sleep tonight and lose my memory you would, dear Una, find me the most joyful person in the world."

And to Judge Brown:

"Spells come," he wrote, "when nothing seems to mat-

ter. Everything turns black, the present, the future and in retrospect the past is black also. I wonder where I am going and for whom! After all I have still no one to live for."

Thus haunting, always haunting him, was the image of a girl from Boston whose name was Patience.

Alger was mid-Victorianism in America, part and parcel of a Sunday school era, swathed in sentiment, zealous in his preachments. Though he failed to grasp the significance of his position he was in truth the leader of the moral forces of his day. His stories were called masterful, the churches lauded them, and the magazines in which they appeared prospered by their aid. Staid men recommended them to their children. In juvenile literature he loomed as a Moses and his texts were reverenced as commandments.

All unaware he went his fairly modest way. His insatiable ambition was to write a book which would bring fame everlasting, but only his intimate friends were permitted a glimpse at the inner machinations of his mind. By the public he was accounted a fortunate man. Yet misery filled the days and nights for him. His focus was on a goal he could not achieve and though he tried to lengthen his stride he failed to step beyond the shadow of his mediocrity. With childish enthusiasm he built a halo about his sanctum. Wherever he was he surrounded himself with atmosphere that purported to be artistic. A miniature bust of Shakespeare accompanied him on his travels. Soft carpets were among his indispensables. In writing moods he affected a smock

and took pleasure in rumpling his hair and observing himself in a mirror to make sure the rumpling was accomplished in Bohemian style. He enjoyed the sight of many pencils lying on a desk before him and issued stringent injunctions against interruptions while he labored.

Radicalism had little place in his being. To the congregation over which for a brief interval he presided he was a true son of God: meek, unassuming, content to accept things as they came, capable—provided he had copious notes before him—of stimulating his flock to strive ever and anon toward morality and still more morality. "The old conservative," they called his father, and him they called the young. "Mr. Alger is so sincere," observed a member of the parish. "He is so good." If this was a reference to moral goodness it may be open to question and certainly cannot be settled without explicit definition. In his thinking Horatio was good and reasonably pure. In his living Horatio was good and also reasonably pure. He had his moments.

III
LITERATURE PREFERRED

He was a pathetic, shrivelled figure the day the family packed him off to college. Most of his baggage had been routed in advance, but half a hundred odds and ends, overlooked in the pandemonium of too early preparation, now were wrapped about his person. As, weighted down with knickknacks, he stepped for the first time upon the sacred soil of Harvard, he was espied by a number of those inimitable darlings, the sophomores, who fell in love with him at once. The central object of their deep affection, he was hauled about the institution grounds until he fainted. All this he supposed to be part of an initiatory ritual and he bore up bravely. When it was over and he was allowed to proceed with registration, a boy approached him and, in friendly manner, said, "That wasn't fair. They shouldn't have treated you so roughly."

"But doesn't every freshman get the same?" Horatio asked.

The boy smiled grimly. "I'm just a freshman, too. Let them try it on me—if they dare!"

Alger came to admire this classmate of his, whose name was Joseph H. Choate.

Sixteen is an impressionable age and Harvard looked to Alger like the grandest institution in the world. Even that first encounter with the student body could not shake his faith in its nobility. How proudly he must have made the first entry in his diary, saying, "I, Horatio Alger, signed the roll and am now a scholar at Harvard!" How firmly he must have held his pen to write "I promise to do my best in every subject and uphold the learning of this great place!" And what an extraordinary ambition his must have been as he declared, "Everything that happens I will keep a record of in complete detail so that I will be able to see progress made and be guided accordingly."

Well, the promise to himself to keep a record in complete detail was made in good faith but not faithfully adhered to. Thus, so far as scholastic activities are concerned, they are in most instances dismissed with a mere "attended classes today". In other matters, however, Alger was scrupulously exact and went to the trouble of recording baths and changes of underwear. A few entries reveal an astounding capacity for minuteness: "Walked for half an hour in the sunlight and watched the sparrows. Walked for 20 minutes and studied the trees—could pick out the oak trees and elms but found I have much information to learn. Very few people out for walking, counted only 7 in 3 hours. Tired then and went back but purchasing a pair of shoes

first. Made bath ready and fresh underclothes and put on shoes, not very comfortable but will be very soon. Read in Isaiah and some in Exodus. My head burned and lay down until Mrs. C. returned."

Alger had taken a room in the residence of Mrs. Frances Curran, a widow of middle age to whom he had been recommended by his former headmaster, Obiadiah Albee. In his new quarters he kept strictly to himself, though more from shyness than lack of sociability. For Mrs. Curran he entertained a profound respect. In the diary she is frequently mentioned: "Mrs. C. made broth which was excellent. She is a splendid cook. . . . Found a new towel on bed embroidered with my initial by Mrs. C. I thanked her. . . . Talked with Mrs. C. and am surprised at her learning which is great. . . . She is a good woman."

Many times did Horatio do her honor with that last noted phrase. "She is a good woman" when she darns his socks and when she keeps him from oversleeping in the morning; also when she bakes him a huge cake "with chocolate on top and in between for Sunday supper." But alas for Alger's high regard! The day soon came when Mrs. Curran ceased to be a good woman, for, as the diary tragically relates,

"She stood in the doorway as I passed to my room and had on very little and I might have seen her bare but I did not look. I shall move to where there is greater respect for decency."

True to his decision, Alger transferred his belongings to the home of one Miss Mullins, whose prime function

in life was furnishing shelter, at a consideration, to strangers. Whether Miss Mullins also developed a propensity for disrobing before the youth is open to question, but for this worthy cause or some other Horatio departed the house three days after entering it. "Am not satisfied," says the diary laconically. "I must be more careful where I go."

Next he takes up residence with Floyd Thurstone and in a letter home advises that Mr. Thurstone "is an agreeable gentleman with white hair and takes a great interest in my studies. Last night we talked about the slaves and he stated he once owned many slaves in the State of Georgia but some of them were burned in a fire and he gave the others their freedom so that he could come North and earn a living for himself."

Here at last Horatio was glad to remain, for in the landlord he encountered a sympathetic personality. "He hears my lessons and helps me in mathematics. Also he reads poetry that is a pleasure to hear." A few days later: "He is a devout Catholic. At six o'clock we drove in his cart and I was very happy. He is pleased to look at the stars and is old and kind. He inquired after my plans for the future but he does not think I should be a minister. Once upon a time he must have been a teacher for that is what he thinks I ought to become and if he could live over again he said he would be a teacher to the slaves. Later we ate cookies and talked of philosophy."

It was an old two-family house that Thurstone occupied and the mortgage on it was large and payments

hard to meet. The man had a small income which enabled him to live in reasonable comfort, but an unwise speculation in a Philadelphia book shop suddenly reduced him to straitened circumstances and he was faced with the loss of his home. Horatio became aware of the old man's plight and furiously concentrated his energy on an essay for which the college offered a prize of forty dollars. This he intended to present to Mr. Thurstone as a gift. In due time the award was made, to Alger, the title of his paper being "Athens at the Time of Socrates". Thurstone was glad enough to accept the contribution and at his death bequeathed to his former lodger, as a token of his gratitude, two thousand dollars and his watch and chain and ring. This is the first known specific instance of Alger's spontaneous generosity, a trait which was an integral part of his character, his disposition to dispense charity—never ostentatiously, always with a fine consideration of the pride of the recipient—indicating a basic kinship with humanity which, under certain conditions, might have blossomed into a broad understanding of the ways of men and thus have given him the groundwork for a literary career such as he often dreamed of.

Because of his generosity paupers hounded him through life. Not in vain, either, because always they got what they wanted. At length, overwhelmed by the recurring demands of some of them, he undertook to keep a book in which he listed their names and requirements, and at stated intervals sent them what he knew they would come for. There was some waste in this

method, of course, as in the case of a Mrs. L., who continued to receive two dollars every three months for her baby long after the baby was established in the Hebrew Orphan Asylum. Tony S. was down for five tons of coal for several winters. When Horatio on one cold day went to warm himself at Tony's fire, he found that the house had been torn down and a store erected in its place.

At college Alger splurged in languages. Mr. Thurstone was an accomplished linguist, and when he said "It is a joy to be familiar with foreign tongues," Horatio pounced upon every language in sight. Nothing but French, however, really appealed to him, so to this more than to any other subject the student devoted his time. His diary reveals a plan to visit France at the first opportunity. There is reason to believe he was thus preparing himself for a journey which in fact he did make within the course of a very few years. Besides French, Alger was a proficient scholar in Greek and Latin and Italian. German he studied, too, but here his standing was poor. During four years at Harvard his average ranking in all studies was tenth out of a total of sixty-two students.

Alger made few friends at college. His favorite companion during this period of his life was Alexander Chapman, then studying under a private tutor. Chapman was the son of a wealthy shipbuilder who had purchased a house next to Thurstone's. Becoming inseparable, the boys laid plans which would insure their

being together in the years ahead. Most of the plans originated with Alexander but Horatio cheerfully acceded to them all. "We have considered the advantages afforded by the practice of law," says the diary, "and we agreed to proceed with study at once." A little later we learn that "Lexy thinks we ought to be shipbuilders and start a branch of his father's business in London. Tomorrow we may talk with Mr. Chapman." On other occasions decisions were rendered in favor of opening "an academy for the advancement of knowledge in the sciences" and for "establishing a powerful organization which will undertake a wide study of the negro problem and what can be done to reconcile the views of slave holders and non-slave holders."

The ministry was not altogether out of Horatio's mind, for there were days when heredity asserted itself and we read, two weeks after a decision "to embrace a career in politics," that "nothing is more necessary to mankind than an understanding of the vital influence of religion and I would be unwise to forego the privilege of serving the needs of my fellow men in the capacity of spiritual adviser." Religion was one vocation that Alexander could not see. "Lexy said religion is a barrier to mental growth," Alger wrote. "He assured me that a minister is too much concerned with the trivial concerns of his followers to be able to keep in touch with larger affairs. He has decided to go South and buy a cotton plantation." Ultimately Chapman did go South but he did not buy a plantation. He died from

the thrust of a Confederate's bayonet at the battle of Antietam.

Through Alexander Chapman, Horatio Alger first met Patience Stires. The girl was Lexy's cousin. With her mother she had come from her home in Boston for an extended visit to the Chapmans. "Lexy introduced me to his relative of whom he is very fond," is Horatio's entry for October 4, 1849, when he was seventeen and she was a few months younger. "She is an agreeable girl. She wore a yellow bonnet. Her eyes are hazel and sad." Within a week Horatio discovered that "Patience has dimples and her teeth are white as snow. Lexy is fond of her. I am fond of her too. Tomorrow we shall walk together." Other virtues in the young lady Horatio was not slow to discern. Thus, "Patience is a good Latin scholar. She is slender and lovely and this afternoon she informed me her desire is to learn to sing. I think she sings beautifully now." By Christmas Alger is madly in love. He finds studying a bore, Mr. Thurstone becomes for the time being unbearable, and Lexy is a fool "always propounding great schemes which no sensible person would listen to, much less make an effort to consummate."

Before leaving for home Patience agreed to become Horatio's wife. She had her mother's consent, Horatio had *his* mother's consent. Only Mr. Alger, Sr. had objections. Mr. Alger, Sr. was a powerful minority. We know already that his objections prevailed. Thirty years after, at the conclusion of a service in the First Unitarian Parish in South Natick of which he had be-

come pastor, the elder Alger received a message urging him to come at once to the home of a dying woman. He went and sat at the bedside of Patience Stires. "My dear son," he wrote to Horatio in New York, "I have just come from a visit to a Miss Stires for whom, if recollection serves, you evinced an attachment when you were a boy. She has been living in Concord and has come here in the hope of seeing you again. The woman is seriously ill and I would be derelict in my duty if I failed to comply with her request and inform you of her desire." Horatio went at once to South Natick. He did not know it but he was racing against a competitor whose mediocrity was vaster than his own and therefore bound to be successful. Like Horatio Alger, Jr., death has never varied its story.

Plans for a literary career took shape in Alger's mind shortly after Patience left him. Never popular at the college, he now remained more than ever by himself. And now, with no pressure from his father, he devoted long hours to meditation and poured his sentiments over the pages of a black cloth volume which is his diary. "Am reading Moby Dick," he wrote, "and find it exciting. What a thrilling life the literary must be! Imagination and observation—these I take to be the important requisites. Would it be desirable for me to take up writing as a life work? The satisfaction resulting from a beautiful story must be inspiring—a story that rouses readers to a new sense of the fine things of life. Have I the ability to write? Why not

—if I am conscientious and observe closely all that goes on about me?"

The close proximity of graduation created something of a mental panic in his mind. To be a minister or to be a writer—that was his question. Floyd Thurstone advocated writing. Mr. Alger, Sr. more than advocated the ministry—he insisted on it and flew into a rage when finally made to realize how seriously his son considered ignoring it. Threats, he found, availed him little, and then he resorted to attempts at compromise. His trump was to have the boy take up God as his vocation and writing as a side line. And this scheme might have prevailed had not Horatio been invited to join the Greek Literary Society, which was then in the process of formation by a group of undergraduates. The aims enunciated at the initial meeting must have been glowing, for they inspired young Alger enthusiastically to write " . . . and we will strive to promote interest in the best reading *and* writing among young people for the benefit of all literature. I am excited and eager to see this work pushed forward and I have pledged myself to continue my efforts even after graduation and to work toward the establishment of scholarships or prizes for the best literature produced by our members. Everybody anticipates a spirited association. How can it help but be so! All my spare time I intend to devote to it."

Three weeks marked the duration of the spirited Greek Literary Association, but its demise must be attributed to impending examinations and the necessity

of preparing for them rather than to any lessening of ardor on the part of the members. Though its life was short, it served to nerve Horatio for any assault his father might undertake against his literary aspirations, and when, after receiving a bachelor's degree, he was confronted with the choice of going to theological school at the family's expense or going out in the world to shift for himself, he promptly chose the course which left him free.

Now before him lies the world. It is a big place, the world, to one who has never been from home except to college; but, regardless of size, nothing will faze Horatio. The first requisite is money; he must eat and have a place to lie down. Professor Moore conducts a private school in Boston; there are classes at night. Does Horatio Alger wish to join the staff as an instructor in languages, at night? The offer is accepted. He is young for the post but diligence gets him by. He will have abundant leisure in the daytime, the light of the sun to aid him in his quest for art.

Tonight it is ten o'clock. The moon is holding court in the heavens as the youthful teacher hurries to his rest. Suddenly he stops. Out of the shadows a man appears, dressed in ragged clothes, begging for food. "Come home with me," Horatio says, and the two of them go to his midget room. He serves the stranger with coffee and biscuit and the remaining half of a pie. The stranger beams his gratitude, leans back in a chair and stretches himself luxuriously.

No, Alger has not been to Africa. Neither has the man been there, but for half an hour he tells all about it. " . . . and that is how I trapped the elephant." The young fellow listens intently. Such a recital of adventures grips his imagination. How wonderful to be able to travel! Where else, then, has the newcomer been? To Asia—was he ever in Asia? "Two years, my friend, I spent on the continent of Asia. . . ."

Rather an educated hobo, well spoken, nicely behaved. Alger would like to know more about him, his plans, his future. "I am simply waiting for my opportunity," comments the ragged one. "Some day yet I expect to amount to something. It is, you know, largely a matter of luck. All eminence is based on luck. A soldier waves a flag at the right time, his comrades follow him—and he is a hero! The world gives him anything he wants."

"Did you ever want to write?" Horatio asks.

No, writing is out of his line. But he senses which way the wind blows and he says, "But you look as though you might be a writer." Then he asks for the loan of a dollar and goes away.

Beautiful dreams float before Horatio's eyes. What a splendid vocation is writing! To be among the elect, looked up to, applauded, consulted, honored. To whom else does the world pay so much homage as a writer? A victorious soldier? That cannot be, for is not the pen mightier than the sword? Ah, to write—to phrase clever thoughts, to indite thrilling themes, to capture life and spread it across a page!

In his dreams he is not alone. In the room above are Joel Evans and Joseph Parke, college men like him, both aspirants to authorship. The three of them join forces. After breakfast each day they start out together, then separate, each going in a different direction. In a few hours they will return to write down impressions of what they saw. It is good practice in reporting, it strengthens the powers of observation. Also, it is fun and makes them feel they are getting ahead.

Joel and Joseph are ambitious but not so much as Alger. He goes to great lengths to prepare himself. If he is going to write great books, had he not better begin collecting his material? One never can begin too soon. "I shall start to organize an army of people for my books." There is the man who sells geraniums from a cart: "Old man, four fingers on his left hand; only speaks Italian." There is "ugly looking, gruff voiced" Mr. Castor, proprietor of the grocery on the corner. The blacksmith is there, the gardener, Daniel Wayne Webster—who breeds dogs, "particularly terriers, which I don't like"—and the hunchback newsboy who hawks papers on Tremont Street.

A piece of good luck comes his way. Norman Mayo is launching a weekly magazine. It will be called the *New England Review,* a sectional publication with interest divided between literary and ecclesiastical topics. "Wanted—an assistant to the editor." Horatio is honored by the appointment. So soon to be embarked on a literary career—his success amazes him! But ere long

there is friction in the publication office. Mayo desires him to assist—not direct. The zeal of the young man annoys him, for it is not justified by his ability. "I made a poor choice," writes Mayo. In years to come he will say, "I felt sorry for him. I kept him with me because I felt sure he would find no other place to go. To look with disapproval on one of his suggestions was to invite the saddest expression in his eyes. He did not talk much, but when he did it was with enthusiasm. Most of his projects were impractical. It was impossible to make him understand that publishing has a business side—that finances are as important as writers. Alger was, I am afraid, most incompetent notwithstanding his unbounded faith in his own capacity. His chief fault, I think, was that he could not get started. Even when he possessed a sound idea he was at a loss what to do with it."

Mayo's difficulties are not confined to his subordinate. A few weeks go by, a few issues come out—but nothing much happens. There are not enough subscribers to make it pay, not enough advertisements to meet expenses. Publishers are not philanthropists and the laconic announcement must come. "With this issue we are compelled to suspend operations." Horatio draws a deep breath. It is hard to believe that the *New England Review* is no more. He goes to the office just the same—maybe it is not true—but the office is vacant. The desks have been moved, the shades are up—indeed the paper is dead. Night and day he walks about in a stupor, for this is a shock. What is he to do? He

has given up his class at the school, his funds are low —where will he turn?

And where is his enthusiasm now? What has happened to his high hopes? "I am lonesome and despondent." Funds are scarce and, consequently, food. "Today I had three slices of bread and a pot of tea." Furthermore, it is bitter cold. This November has rushed into the middle of winter without warning. The room is small but it must have heat; wood and coal are expensive for one who cannot afford them. Of course he could have money for the asking. "Dear father, I have encountered some slight misfortune. . . ." Pride intervenes and the letter is destroyed. Sunday comes as the most welcome day of all, for now the church is open and inside it is warm. Really, the church is very warm, and cozy. It does one's heart good just to look around at the comfort of it all, to know that the snow cannot come in though it fall ever so thick and fast upon the colored window panes. He begins to see good things in the church. For him now there is an exhilaration to be derived from the way the people sing. The steady drone of the minister's voice is soothing and heartening. Everything smacks of stability. What an extraordinary institution the church is, after all!

Writing—bah! Perhaps, he thinks, it is just a passing fancy. Who knows but that bigger feats may be performed in the ministry and what prospects it may hold forth. Who can tell—the day may come when the people of the state—the people of the nation and of the world—may find in their spiritual leaders also

the leaders of thought on all perplexing problems of life. "No doubt I was unduly optimistic about literature—no doubt I was mistaken." Well, we shall see. His father is glad to welcome him home and anxious and willing to pay the errant son's tuition at theological school. Soon he is enrolled—he is on the path to the ministry.

At the outset his superiors praise him. He is earnest, studious, competent—a model student, a desirable disciple, eager only to give himself up to the service of God. His mind is on his mission—nothing else; outside influences distract him not at all. For a year this goes on, and another year. High marks, approbation from everybody, at peace with the world. But this young man is not destined for tranquillity. He will not be one of the happy men of the earth. He will be a mental nomad—commuting between ideas, scarcely ever sure of his destination, giving up one project for another with as little reason for relinquishing one as for adopting its successor.

The hour arrives when he begins to relax. He slips a little. No longer is he at the head of his class. His standing slumps and his marks recede from excellent to fair, from fair to poor. Gentle reproaches from the teachers fail to stimulate him. And then they think he needs a rest. They say he has been working too hard. "Go home for a month and then return with renewed interest." The suggestion falls on deaf ears. Rest! Ha, ha! do they think he is a child? His companions find him irritable and shun him. They leave

him alone, more and more. And he falls further behind in his studies. "Go home," says the faculty, "go home until your nerves are in better condition." But home is the last place he wants to see.

At night he goes for a long walk—it is pleasant walking, dreaming while one walks. The next night he goes again, and it becomes a habit. He sees a girl ahead of him and his body quivers. Can it be he has been too far removed from women? She glances over her shoulder and slackens her pace. If he will hurry he may have her. Just for an instant he is bright, alert, tingling with desire. He quickens his step, then halts and turns altogether, to run away. He strives to keep Patience and her purity in mind. For her he will be good.

Two months more to go, then graduation. Will he wait? Will he force himself through? A letter from his father: "You must keep your mind on your work." Fathers should know better and keep their hands out of their sons' affairs. Horatio is sharpening pencils again. He is resurrecting an earlier ambition. Literature. He writes it big. Thereafter the word is wrapped around his mind like a bandage—it will not again be removed—not once, until he dies. Literature! He grasps the 'L' and holds fast. What a bumpy word it is! The letters look like mountains and plains—and what a rough journey it is to get to the second 'e'! But he starts, he is determined to traverse the road no matter how hard. Just see what a lovely letter this 'L' is. It is the beginning of many things, of Life, and Leadership, and Love.

Writing from his dormitory, he says: "I will stay out the time in order to graduate. I figure the past three years have been wasted but I will receive my degree as something to carry through the years to remind me of my folly."

A carriage rolls up to the school on a warm afternoon in spring. Two young men clamber out and inquire for Alger. One is six feet two, and weighs two hundred and fifteen pounds. Gilbert Ramsbotham is his name. He is boisterous, good-natured, and at the age of twenty-seven still imbued with the mischievousness of a child. He is happiest when drunk. The other person is Martin Embry, who is shorter, tamer, shrewder, with an expression less open and honest. He, like Alger, would have literature for his mistress, but he keeps his thoughts to himself, no one knows his plans.

What are these strangely different fellows doing in Cambridge and why are they calling on Alger? They are former classmates—they were with him in Gates Academy years ago, when all were children. In a few weeks they will sail to Europe, for pleasure's sake. It pleases them to look up their old comrade.

The meeting is mutually enthusiastic. Gilbert and Martin dismiss the sombre miens with which they think it will be necessary to greet a minister in the making. He is, after all, a good fellow. Nothing holy about him —why, he doesn't discuss religion at all! "Say, Horatio, come along with us, we're going to London and Paris." They expect he will say no. He does say no, but he adds, "I would go if I could afford it." He will

be able to afford it but at the moment he does not know how. He is not aware that Floyd Thurstone is to die on the morrow and will leave him money enough and to spare.

It is a proud father who comes to see the graduating exercises at Cambridge Theological School. Now his boy, like himself, will be a minister. He is satisfied at last. Or is he a trifle worried? Why is it he finds no one in Horatio's room? What makes it seem barren, and dusty, and empty? Mrs. Alger comes too. "Horatio," she calls, "where are you?" There is no answer. "Horatio! Horatio!" Still no answer. Poor little old woman, a choky feeling rises to her throat, she feels tears in her fading blue eyes. Horatio!

"He must be somewhere in the building," says his father, confidently.

"He is not in the building," sobs Mrs. Alger. "I'm sure he has gone away."

And so he has. Away to Europe, to the lands of culture, to the old world where books are made.



Cover for an Alger opus:

Ben, the Luggage Boy
or, Among the Wharves

IV
GENIUS HAS PREROGATIVES

Ramsbotham expressed a desire to ignore London and go right on to Paris, but in this he was overruled. It was decided, after genial bickering and sundry compromises, to devote a week to the English metropolis. Ramsbotham saw little more of the city than was visible from the first ale-house to which he repaired. For the first five days he revelled in a state of tipsiness the while his comrades Embry and Alger stalked the trail of adventure. Adventure, however, was not at home that week, at least to these two young men who went so eagerly in its pursuit. "I expected something more," said Alger, "than the common sort of place it is. Why, so far as I can see, nothing ever happens here." Alas, alas for London! Confronted with opportunity that might have brought it fame immortal, it failed lamentably to make the faintest showing.

What reconciled Horatio to that brief sojourn was the residence in the city of Mr. Dickens. As yet he had not read any of the English author's fiction, but the man's reputation was something which Alger regarded with awe and admiration. He persuaded Embry

to accompany him on a visit to the Dickens' homestead but complete lack of success greeted their several efforts to find him in. Bored, tired from walking through crowded streets, their ardor dimmed by a day indoors necessitated by "a constant, malicious rain," they resolved to rescue Ramsbotham from himself and cross the Channel. Prepared to sail—ready, in fact, to board the boat—Alger almost disrupted the party by begging to be allowed another week. His companions listened in amazement to this sudden whim and pronounced him crazy. Finding that his mere appeal could not change their plans, Alger ventured a reason. The time might come, he said, when he would want to write stories about English life and he felt he ought to wait and gather further notes. This explanation was worse than none at all. "Horatio a writer!" guffawed Ramsbotham, punctuating the laugh with a poke in Horatio's ribs—a poke that, as Alger noted, "is as fierce as an ox's kick—the fellow is such an unthinking brute."

If the interval in London was a disappointment, the first few days in Paris were a catastrophe. Fog and rain and a slicing cold squelched the city to a murmur. Even Ramsbotham, with his bluff and blustering manner, was quelled. The three friends wandered aimlessly together, not venturing far in any direction, feeling that what they saw was all there was to see and that here indeed had been perpetrated a gigantic fraud.

"It doesn't come anywhere near to what I looked for," declared Alger in a letter to his brother James.

"It is just like any other city. This talk of gaiety is false—everything is quiet and moral, and though I did not expect to find a bedlam I anticipated something entirely different—more vivacity and less routine."

Recommended by one of Embry's relatives, they had secured accommodations in a modest, private dwelling, and there, in their rooms for several nights, they shook their fists at fate and wondered what to do. It was Ramsbotham who decided. No more could his boundless energy be cooped within four walls when there might, somewhere within the city confines, be merriment afoot. The weather showed signs of improvement and he proposed a tour of investigation. He appealed to the owner of the house for suggestions, which were quickly forthcoming, and that evening he issued a command to march. Embry obeyed willingly but Horatio hung back. There was that in the promises which the expedition held forth that frightened him. He begged off. The two friends went without him.

Next day they told him of a café they had found and of their rising hopes. They went again and again, and were discovering the Paris of their dreams, and having so hilarious a time that they quite forgot Alger had started out to be with them. Hearing him say that he preferred not to join them, they believed him and left him to his own devices. They did not realize the havoc their tales of wine and women were wreaking in his mind; for new passions and desires now made inroads into Alger's soul. He was struggling for his way in a vast blackness that extended in all directions. Sex

became the dominant issue of his days and he wanted to rip it out and throw it away, as though it were a cancerous substance which could be gripped and twisted and removed. He was experiencing less the fight of a man and more the fight of a virgin girl who has made a rendezvous to be loved in a generous way. He vowed he would not succumb to temptation—not then, not ever. Most of the time, to fortify himself, he spent away from the house. His companions he seldom saw, since they would still be sleeping when he left in the middle of the morning.

There followed days when Horatio Alger haunted quiet avenues, straggling along purposelessly or scampering fast, according to the pacing of his thoughts; when he hired a brougham and was trotted in aristocratic fashion past crowded thoroughfares where he could envisage at close range the animated faces of talking, gesticulating Parisians; when he buried himself at the foot of a tree along the Seine, hidden, stored away and apart, with only the tumbling water and the passionless blue sky to commune with; when he mulled in front of book stalls, fastidiously handling dirty, paper covered volumes, incuriously inspecting titles and frontispieces, never enough enamored of a single tome to buy; when he stalked the corridors of the Louvre, simulating interest while inexpressibly bored, yet convinced he must not miss an exhibit lest on that account he be considered an inobservant traveler.

There followed springy, quick-moving days with Emmet Colvin, a casual acquaintance, who spoke of the

color and glamor of Spain, and filled him with a desire to go there, which he promised to do but didn't; and there were more dashing, hurtling days with Arnold Stuart, to whom he was introduced by his landlord, who regaled him with tales of voyages made to wild, uncivilized nooks and crannies of the earth and who kept him constantly fascinated until, discovering Stuart was an epileptic and beholding him one day the victim of a seizure, he foreswore his company, horrified and afraid; and, too, there were limping, halting, stumbling days with Morris Gutterman, a German, who wanted to go to America and asked interminable questions about its commercial opportunities.

Avidly he made notes of what he saw and heard, and angrily destroyed most of them because he considered they had no value. Notre Dame was just a place to him —"a big place and I didn't stay there long". But from the cathedral he headed for the Morgue, which was, he had heard, a splendid place for copy and much frequented by journalists. Arriving, he obtained admission. In the Morgue he met Elise Monselet.

Or Elise Monselet, rather, met him. She saw him moving about, forlorn, ill at ease, alone. Some weeks before, her man had left her—gone away—had not come back. And thinking he might have lost his life and remained unidentified, she visited the Morgue. Well, it didn't matter terribly. Here, to be sure, was another chap—not a bad sort to look at, and an American. She was, one must understand, getting bored with Frenchmen.

So Elise bumped into Horatio, and he apologized, and she accepted the apology, and he bowed and she bowed, and they talked about the weather and the lovely day, which reminded them they ought to quit the dismal place in which they were and walk in the sunshine outside. On the way Elise met a girl she knew, and as the group of them stood talking, Gilbert Ramsbotham, out for a stroll, accosted Alger. Gilbert was taken in tow by Elise's friend and that was the last but once that Alger saw him; henceforth, in Paris, he was to live with his newly found acquaintance. He thanked Horatio for his part in the introduction; invited him to call some time; and light-heartedly departed.

Elise was a singer in a reasonably genteel café. She was short and plump, with small, baby blue eyes that squinted when she was mad. Her voice had no particular merit but she used it effectively to mimic celebrities of the day and that was enough to make her position secure. She was not the dirty prostitute which Embry, in a mean moment, called her, but, on the contrary, clean in her habits and inclined to be faithful to one man at a time so long as he paid her the necessary attentions. Elise liked Alger more at the beginning than later on, because, in the beginning, he was unspoiled, unused to Paris night life, a novice—indeed, a simple child. And she had the mothering instinct.

With a remarkable suddenness Horatio Alger ceased to grapple with his moral scruples. More, he felt he had been foolish to hold himself so long aloof from

Parisian ladies, since here at least was one whom he could know and be with, without any thought of immorality entering into the relationship. But he reckoned, did Horatio, without his hostess. For she induced him to visit her café. He went, tried to drink and didn't like it—didn't dance because he had never learned—but contented himself with watching the revelry which others made. Watching he enjoyed. He was part of the riot and yet was distinct from it. He delighted in hearing Elise perform and was proud of the homage and applause which were her share. He swelled with pride when, between numbers, the girl came and sat by him, refusing invitations to dance and drink at other tables.

This interval in Paris with Elise progressed for a little, happy while. The first change came when Alger, at the maiden's request, escorted her to a ball. After it, upon reaching home and the landing on which was her room, she asked him in; but he was disinclined to go. Though he had seen Elise often, and often taken her to her door, he never before had gone so far as to climb the stairs.

"Don't stand here talking, people will come up," said Elise, and stamped her foot. He scarcely heard. Cruel passions were abroad again, rights and wrongs went tumbling fiercely through his mind; then, metamorphosed into something nearly physical, cascaded in a torrent through his body.

"Don't, then. Good night——."

He went in. She helped him to pet her and they slept together. It was Horatio's first night.

"Feb. 4th. I was a fool to have waited so long. It is not vile as I thought. Without question I will be better off physically, anyhow I have sometimes thought so. She is more passionate than me. . . ."

"Feb. 6th. I ought to know more. Elise makes fun of me. She says she knows I wanted to . . . I am learning things from her."

"Feb. 7th. Should I go on and is it right? What makes it wrong? She doesn't think it is wrong and nobody else does, only I."

"Feb. 10th. I won't do it again. If nothing else, from now on I will be clean. I *shall.* They may laugh but I will leave if anything they say to me. I want to be alone and I don't want to see Elise. She must leave me alone. I want to get away somewhere anyhow. My head aches."

Horatio advised Elise that he was through; the girl did not think so, but said nothing. She still liked him and decided to wait. He would, she knew, come back. For a few days he did remain away. Then, one evening, he headed for the café; but before leaving his room he wrote something in his diary, and this is it:

"I want to live to be great. Suppose it is vain—all great men are vain. What have they got that I need to be like them? Whatever it is I will see. If I insist

with myself why shouldn't I be, as well as the rest of them? It is just something that grows inside and I can feel it just as surely as I am writing. It seems to depend on doing what you want because all of them are that way. I will do *what I want* hereafter, least I can do is try. They say true genius has no bounds as to conventions. Genius has prerogatives. Then I will have prerogatives too."

After sleepless nights he thus gave up the struggle. Elise won. Her body he preferred to his principles, and his surrender was complete. On a prerogative platform he ran his race through Paris. And for a spell it was a merry one. He raised his voice high in song and learned to dance with the best. From out of the nowhere he acquired a boisterous manner. A festive spirit invaded his being and he exercised it much. He was happy, very happy, with Elise, though as yet he did not realize the lucky strike he had made through this chance acquaintance. This singing mimic knew many of those who, in a minor way, contributed to the literature of France. Discovering that Alger was bent on a literary career, a different Elise appeared—a truly cultured, literary Elise who, though disappointed in the man's own lack of brilliance, yet fervidly conversed with him of books and those who made them. She gave him a dazzling picture of the golden decade, the 1840-50 decade, when Hugo wrote *Notre Dame,* and Balzac his *Comédie Humaine;* when Dumas bore his Musketeers and made the *Count of Monte Cristo* and Murger completed the unforgettable *Scènes de la Vie de Bo-*

héme, and when the *Wandering Jew* and the *Mysteries of Paris* were turned out in driblets by Eugene Sue. Elise took him in her talks to England and told him more of Dickens, who in that glorious decade biographed *David Copperfield* and finished *Barnaby Rudge* and *Chuzzlewit* and the Dombeys. Elise told him of the stir the Englishman Thackeray had made with *Vanity Fair* and the youth *Pendennis,* all in those ten years that mankind must never cease to marvel at; other books and authors she discoursed on—the *Caxtons,* the *Last of the Barons* and *Night and Morning,* by Bulwer Lytton.

Ah, what a joy it was for Alger to sit at Elise's feet at the close of day and partake of her ardor and knowledge! What stores of information this French child had accumulated, how alive and tense her body as she enlarged on this story and that, and how enraptured she was to see impregnated in her lover's soul some of the burning enthusiasm which was hers! She took Alger to resorts where lesser writers were, places at which the man could see for himself how the literati were esteemed, worshipped, made heroes of. Discreetly enough Alger held himself in the background, for, with nothing to contribute, he was sufficiently wise to remain an auditor, to be silent and only seen. In profound amazement he listened to tales—some wholly false, others only partly true—about the great men who were writing in that day—about their amours, their friends and enemies, their mental quirks.

At such gatherings Alger was first smitten with the

idiosyncrasy-germ which was, in after years, to develop so strongly in himself. He was astounded at the tale of Victor Hugo sitting on a throne, a canopy above him, a line of admirers waiting to kiss his hand. He was thrilled by hearing that Hugo sent his son to fight a duel and afterward had embraced him publicly for winning it. The gatherings spoke of Champfleury, who urged the abolition of money and who used to eat his fill at the best cafés; then rise and say, "Now I am satisfied but I have no money. Come, what are you going to do?"

Of anecdotes of Sue he never could hear enough. Not many years before, the people of Paris were compelled to rent—it was impossible to buy them outright—the weekly papers in which installments of the *Mysteries* were running; and Alger tingled to hear how Sue had taken on a lordly, overbearing manner because of his success, and of the mistresses he had and how they would have died for him; and how a wealthy reader had pleaded with him to make his installments longer, offering to pay heavily for the favor. And of de Musset he took in stories, how he hated dogs and would shoot them on sight; and of Gautier, who loved flowers and wrote chiefly in the summer time when they were all abloom. Alger was in Paris when Murger, at the age of 39, passed on. And he and Elise sat with groups of men and women whose faces, stained with tears, bespoke a genuine grief at his demise. Not before or after did Alger see or hear of a man so deeply loved, so sincerely mourned, as Paris' great Bohemian.

There, then, in the French capital, the young American got his preliminary taste of literary life. Its effect on him was lasting. It lent stimulus to ambitions which never died, which were to be the goal of his existence, the guiding star. His hilarity vanished in the presence of those who wrote. In quiet ecstasy he made the rounds, clinging to Elise's arm, keeping to himself as much as circumstances would allow. Embry, corresponding with his sister in America, described Alger as he then appeared in Paris.

"Times are," he wrote, "when he comes and goes without seeming to know that he is doing either, as if he were preoccupied with weighty affairs that mere mortal man cannot expect to grasp. Why, Mary, it is weird to see the far-away gaze that haunts his eyes even when the rest of us are engaged in violent talk—he just sits and stares and says nothing for so long that his doze becomes noticeable and some of us are willing to believe he is posing. He is no poet and has no breadth of imagintion that I have been able to discern, yet he does once in a while advance a startling suggestion; viz., last night he inquired of the advisability of three authors, presented with a stipulated set of circumstances, moulding them into a story and having their separate versions printed together, in such manner affording the readers a glimpse of how their minds react. I have also seen him begin to expound other ideas but he seldom finds himself able to work them out completely in his mind. In other words, his thinking seems to break down before it gets very far ahead. He isn't much to

look at, nor entertaining to be with, and still I can't help thinking he is not an ordinary person. He may be above, or he may be below, but I have no doubt he is not average."

To Elise's café there came at length one Charlotte Evans, a maiden fair, of English birth, a student of painting in Paris. A determined looking maiden she, with grey eyes and the blackest hair and the reddest lips, and a lithe and luscious form. Charlotte came once and saw Horatio; a second time she came, confirmed the fact that she liked him, guessed his relationship with Elise and set herself to sever it. One could hardly say she used a fine technique. She approached him, as he commented in his diary,

"brusquely and noisily, engaging in conversation, later asking me to dance, which I politely rejected."

Far from being dismayed, the young woman accepted the challenge, displaying such versatility in conversation that her prey could not be otherwise than impressed. A ready wit and a caressing smile, an avowed eagerness to be of service—and soon a spell was being woven round the man. Elise saw, and grinned, and turned away quite unalarmed, underestimating the English girl's ability. Horatio was gone before she knew it; gone, not voluntarily, but unable longer to resist the wiles of Charlotte. There, for a certainty, he made a mistake. He should have asserted more independence. By permitting her to wield the upper hand at the beginning, he lost all chance of wielding it later; she was boss and knew it. To prove to the world that her mas-

tery was complete, she compelled Horatio to go back with her to the café where they had met. And there, while Elise went through her act and evinced her unconcern, Horatio endured a mental anguish which made it impossible ever to give to Charlotte his fullest measure of love.

Charlotte held him fast. Unbelievably lovely when she chose to be, at other times possessed of a vicious temper, she made him tolerate her varying moods. They lived together, she well satisfied with her bargain, he dejected and morose. Once he decided to leave her —but only once. She stormed his room and delivered such a lecture on what constituted good manners that he felt thoroughly ashamed and agreed to return instantly. Which he did. How miserable he was he set forth in the comforting pages of his diary:

"Tonight she had another crying fit but what for or what is the cause I don't pretend to know. I don't think she knows herself—just stupidly hysterical and screaming enough to hurt my ears. Always, always, *always* yelling. I am under no obligations to her but how can I get away?—she would find me again and pester me to death. Maybe I wouldn't like to choke her!"

Under her tyranny Alger wilted fast. He fell into a state of lethargy from which he was long in recovering. Discarded scruples returned to plague him. What had been a passionate, prodigious life turned into a monotonous routine of self-accusations and remorse. Retribution fell upon him with a vengeance. He was

ashamed of his weakness. As he was tormenting himself, a letter came from his mother. She wrote:

"I have had no word from you for six months. I do not know whether you are well or even if you are living, which I pray to Heaven you are both. What have I done to have you not think of me at all? Though you may not think of me, I think of you each day. You are always in my heart. There must be some good reason why you have forgotten.

"All here are well and wondering where you are, though your Father is angry you should be so silent. Write to me, my boy, for I bless you and keep wishing you were back. Keep your faith in God, for He is good and will care for you if you remember Him.

"Your affectionate
"Mother."

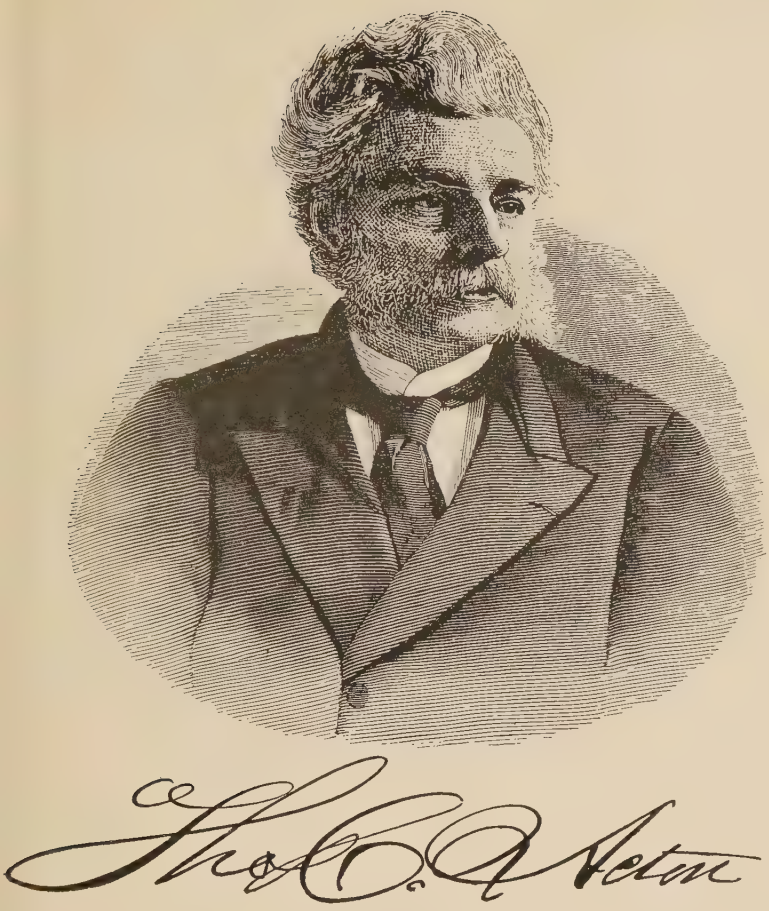
"Nov. 15. Said good-by to Embry. He is surprised that I am leaving. I am not so surprised as glad. Went to see Elise. She was sad and kind. Kissed me farewell. I do not love her at all but I like her simple ways. Now my task is to get away without seeing Charlotte."

He managed successfully to get aboard without seeing Charlotte. But he didn't fool her. She sailed on the same boat. It just happened that Embry wasn't discreet.

V
ALMOST IN A WAR

Charlotte bothered him not a bit after the boat tied up in New York. Alger "left her for a minute, to go across the way and purchase a newspaper." Then he ran like the devil. Previously, with a marked display of acumen, he had arranged to have his baggage forwarded to Massachusetts. Perhaps Charlotte made inquiries about his baggage, but if she did she failed to use to advantage the knowledge so gained. They never met again.

It was the end of November, very cold, and Horatio was ill. He weighed 110 pounds and needed nourishment. He had sixteen dollars and needed clothes and comfort. Massachusetts began to look to him like heaven. So he took a train and went home. His mother met him at the station, forgave him his delinquencies, fed him, fondled him, and fortified his spirit with her love and kindness. The senior Alger was away and would be, on account of business, for weeks to come, which made the homecoming even more pleasureable. Freed for the moment from any material concern, Horatio browsed about the little town, daily gaining



Thomas C. Acton,
Chief of the New York police when . . .

strength, gradually growing more content. Reading took a little time; writing a little more. He was reading Shakespeare and writing poetry:

Poem, exhibit A—

The wind blew fierce across the rolling sea;
Yet all that wide expanse to me
Seemed fraught with dreams. What did I see?
Through the mist—a picture of what is to be.

Another world unfurled. Bright and clear
It rose to sight, and I stood near.
It filled me with a strange foreboding; a sudden fear
Took hold, and banished cheer.

Poem, exhibit B—

An old man came upon a stream at close of day.
Deep in the forest he had lost his way.
An unseen stranger, passing, heard him say:
"Night is falling and methinks 'tis time to pray.

"I pray that I shall find the thing I seek.
"Then life shall ne'er again be bleak,
"Ne'er again shall I be weak,
"If I but find that which I seek."

Poem, exhibit C—

Here is a sad man, here is a clown,
One wears a smile, the other a frown.
One looks up and the other looks down—
One from the country and one from the town.

The one is cheerful, the other is sad;
The one is mourning, the other is glad.
For one was good and the other was bad,
One named Tim and the other named Tad.

Infinite the number of poems he started, few the number completed. But they helped to pass away the time which otherwise might have hung heavy on his hands until the hour of reckoning which was bound to come. When his mother hailed him at last and gently inquired about his plans for the future, he intimated he was more than ever resolved to pursue a literary course, whereupon his mother, with a sigh, handed him a letter. It was addressed to her by her husband and, in part, read:

"On the 23d I shall reach Boston and promptly go home, in order that we may spend Christmas together. It will be good to see you after this extended absence. As for my wayward son—need I say, dearest Olive, how anxious I am to see him again! I trust he has seen sufficient of the world to stay at home hereafter and settle himself to useful endeavor. I have in mind a church which will soon seek the services of another minister . . ."

Mr. Alger reached his home a few days later, in time for the Christmas holiday, as he had planned; but it was a sorrowing wife who bade him welcome. Their first-born had gone away again, she told him, this time to Boston, in search of work, but work which would not be associated with the clergy.

In Boston Alger nearly starved. Timidity kept him

from applying for positions, while pride precluded an appeal for help to his father. At a crucial moment he came in contact with Alfred Wright, once a classmate at Gates Academy, who opened his home to him for as long as he wanted to stay. Wright was a Garrison abolitionist. Of independent means, he spent his time addressing anti-slavery meetings. Some of these Alger attended, out of courtesy, but he was too conservative to endorse the violent methods advanced for setting the colored people free. He was satisfied to listen to the harangues, enjoying somewhat the enthusiastic manner in which they were delivered and received, not for a moment suspecting, however, that behind them was a deadly, menacing earnestness.

One night, about the middle of April, his host burst into his room and roused him from his doze. "It's started," Wright muttered hoarsely, "the war has started!"

War? "What war?" was Alger's question. "Between the North and South," Wright exclaimed. "The South has fired on Fort Sumter!"

Crowds gathered on street corners and in public squares the ensuing day. Men with passions inflamed bitterly denounced the South and its resort to arms. They scowled and talked of treason and a traitor's fate; boasted of quickly wiping out the insult with a mammoth hail of lead; cried aloud their willingness to avenge the rebellious act. Suddenly Alger came to life in another kind of world. In a single day Boston had been transformed from a peaceful city into a community of

hate. No man could walk the streets and be neutral. Though there was yet no war, it seemed impossible there would be no war. Wright, with others of his clan, gave up his home and enlisted in the army. The while Horatio went to Cambridge, to tutor Wilbur Cross in French and Greek.

For several weeks Alger had been considering this offer to undertake the language-education of a wealthy child. His pleasant, easy existence in the Wright household had caused him to delay a decision, but now he went, glad that he would not have to roam the streets again in search of work. The boy he undertook to teach was fifteen years old, and very tall for his age. For learning he had no taste. Horatio, planning ambitiously, found his task difficult. The boy was disinterested in French and Greek; he wanted simply to hear about cannon and shot and shell. The Sixth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteers, marching through the streets of Baltimore on its way to Washington, had been attacked by Confederate friends. Wilbur's cousin was one of the Volunteers and the boy's excitement knew no bounds.

Meanwhile Horatio decided to write his impressions of Paris. He forwarded letters to two Boston papers in an attempt to arrange for their publication, but received no reply. Downcast temporarily, he planned to keep the matter in mind. No doubt he had other literary plans; but they were driven from his thoughts by Wilbur, who, greeting him breathlessly on an afternoon in May, exclaimed that Lincoln had fled from the national capital in the face of an attacking rebel army.

Instantly there surged in him a latent belligerency. With his pupil he hurried to the post office, there to consult the bulletin board for confirmation of the news. It was not true; but from the groups that milled about the building he saw that something else was true—that a deadly conflict was on, that men—some of them his friends, no doubt—already were dead and dying on fields of battle.

He went back with Wilbur and talked about war, his mind no longer on teaching. Day after day the fever expanded in him. He read with avidity accounts of training throughout the North; and then an idea took hold of him. Assisted by Wilbur, he organized the boys of Cambridge and its environs into a military organization. He bought an army manual and began to train them according to its rules. Every afternoon there were drills, and at one time there were as many as a hundred boys on hand. The boys called him captain, which he liked; which, indeed, he encouraged. To many of them he was a hero, worshipped, obeyed without a murmur; some even were willing to believe he had fought at the battle of Bull Run. He learned how easy it is to win a boy's adulation. . . . The company got several flags, and then a band was formed. Most of them drilled with sticks; a few of them had rifles. Horatio himself carried the bow of a violin, a weapon generously loaned him by one of his musically inclined lieutenants.

Before drills Alger adopted the practice of reading a prayer to his cohorts. It seemed, somehow, fitting;

besides, it was an opportunity for putting to practical use part of his theological training.

Older men and women came regularly to watch the maneuvers. They spoke favorably of "Alger's Army of Up-and-Comings". Most of them, that is, spoke favorably. Others wondered why he did not go where he was really needed. Himself—he did not wonder. He preferred being at the head of an army all his own. It was more fun, entailed no hardships, and he considered, sincerely enough, that he was performing an extraordinary service.

Mr. Cross pursued an investigation into Wilbur's French one day and found it wanting. Since he was paying the tutor well, he demanded an explanation. Horatio, disturbed, discoursed irrelevantly on the war and on his army; he took pains to explain that Wilbur was on the verge of being promoted to a sergeantcy. None of which appeased Mr. Cross, who was thoroughly angry. With a firm exercise of authority he eliminated Wilbur's chances of promotion by removing him from the army. Thereupon the boy grew sulky; also, he became a trifle ill. Still finding his father opposed to a sergeantcy in Alger's army, he became, without a moment's notice, well; and ran away from home to enlist in the Twenty-Seventh Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteers.

Alger disappeared immediately after, confirming Mr. Cross's suspicion that he had arranged for the boy's escape. Wilbur had, however, acted independently, without Alger's connivance, and the latter went on into

Boston because he had nothing better to do. Feeling in that city ran high. The Union forces were suffering reverses; the President was calling for additional volunteers. Consumed with patriotic ardor, Alger made a hasty decision to enlist. On his way to a recruiting station he slipped and broke his arm. . . . A day in the hospital and then, with his arm in a sling, he presented himself for service. The injury kept him from being accepted at once but he was urged to report as soon as the break had healed. Not to be kept in idleness, and because he had saved some money, he went on duty, unofficially, as a recruiting officer. It was not a taxing job; Yankees were eager to fight. . . . His arm stayed in a sling longer than was necessary. Unabashed, he permitted rookies to think he had been wounded. . . . For months he did clerical work at headquarters, without enlisting. . . . He mused about Wilbur Cross, wondering where he was; and journeyed to the youth's home in Cambridge to find out. . . . Mrs. Cross was alone—her husband was away, down South, in the army now, fighting rebels. . . . A letter was awaiting Alger, from Wilbur. It read:

"I am having a great time. Johnny Popetetzky is here and we send salutes. We are hoping for a battle quick and I am trying to be a corporal and I hope I am, which I should be. Some have lice and get their hair cut off. Everybody cheered us like a king in Philadelphia. You should be a general I guess. The niggers are funny here. I wish there was target practise but most

we do is march. Send me a letter as every one gets them."

"Won't you," asked Mrs. Cross, "stay here and rest?" "No, I am saying good-by," said Alger.

To Boston once more, where he was advised to join Company F at Pittsfield. Under Colonel Oliver Edwards, Company F had just departed. Alger followed frantically and caught up at Philadelphia. In civilian clothes, and still without being enlisted, he travelled along. The Company was leaving for Washington. On the way there occurred a disastrous wreck from which he escaped uninjured. But while the train was stalled along the track there occurred another wreck —a train behind, in the darkness, steamed forward with a crash. From this he did not escape; again he was hurt —again he broke his arm. Nerves shaken, bones aching, he confounded his luck in a brief missive to Wilbur, and rode back to Cambridge where he lived, sporadically lamenting his ill fortune, at the home of Mrs. Cross.

"My guest'," wrote Mrs. Cross to her husband, in the South, "is still with me. I see little of him, however, for most of the day he keeps to himself, usually staying upstairs, as quiet as a mouse, going out for a few hours in the night. He acts strangely—that is, so reserved and oppressed. One thing, I suppose, he is worrying about paying us for rent. He is about two months back now but I haven't the heart to remind him. He looks honest and I think if he had the money he would pay. Unless you think it advisable I won't mention it to him. Last night, while he was out, I went into the room to get a

book and the desk was open and a pile of papers on it. It was impossible to make out anything he was writing because he has to use his left hand and I imagine he must find it hard to read his own writing. But there was something about every slave his own master and something about the church as a power for arbitration. Maybe he is an author and I should feel proud to have him here!"

Had Mrs. Cross waited but a little while until the use of his right arm was regained, she might have found among the heaps of papers a memorandum, reading as follows:

"Boy living with Mrs. Alice Ruthven. Thinks she is his mother but she is not. His mother perished in a storm years before and his father is also supposed to be dead. His father is living, however, and is an officer in the Union army. The son, Jack, learns Mrs. R. is no relative of his after all. Later a man appears in the village in search of papers on a nearby island where a ship foundered years before. He is seeking papers belonging to Jack's father which will establish his—the villain's—claim to a fortune which should rightfully go to Jack. Foiled by a negro servant; and Jack, who has formed all his young friends into a company and drills them, meets an attack of Confederate infantry and is being beaten back when reinforcements arrive headed by a man who proves to be his father and who in the end marries Mrs. Ruthven who has taken excellent care of Jack."

Fifteen years later, having preserved the memoran-

dum, Alger made it the basis of the best story he wrote about the Civil War—*Young Captain Jack, or The Son of a Soldier.*

Roscoe M. Carpenter very shortly came to Horatio's financial rescue. This gentleman—a lawyer—elderly, comfortably situated, maintained an office in Boston but did much of his work at his home in Cambridge. He employed Alger to assist him in research work. The money received from this occupation enabled Horatio to pay off his debt to Mrs. Cross and in addition to put aside a sum for purposes of emergency. He seems to have foreseen the emergency—a mental one—which dictated an unceremonious departure for New York. His whole spirit, reawakening with the birth of Summer, began to call for adventure, for excitement, clamor, many people, many things. And he pandered to it by packing and getting out on the spur of a moment and taking a train to New York.

That was in the latter part of June, in 1863. For a brief interval he was to rest content with the discordant to-do of the city. He was to remark, during his stay, that "New Yorkers are not giving the support to the War as Boston is. People here talk mostly about high prices for commodities and they wish the War would end one way or another". In the air was much more than a hint of unrest; there was open criticism of the administration at Washington because of its repeated manifestos in favor of War, at whatever cost, until victory. Furthermore, there was afoot a restlessness occasioned by the approaching date for enforcement of the

draft. The local authorities, anticipating trouble, marshalled all their reserves and proclaimed themselves ready to deal with any disturbers of the peace. Alger placed himself before Thomas C. Acton, chief of police, and proffered his services. Acton thanked him but declined to avail himself of the offer, asserting the rumors of mob attacks would never materialize. But they did. An account of what happened during that tumultuous period was written by Alger and subsequently included in a volume entitled *Our Police Protectors,* by A. E. Costello.

"For three days and three nights," wrote Alger, "the rioters maintained a reign of terror. They sacked houses in great numbers, demolished the offices of the Provost General, burned the colored orphan asylum, attacked the police, and chased the negroes—women and children even—wherever they appeared on the streets, and when caught hung them on the nearest lamp-post. They tore down and trampled under foot the National flag, and robbed stores in open day. The Secretary of War ordered home the regiments doing duty in Pennsylvania, but ere they arrived the climax of atrocities had been reached, and through the combined action of the police and the citizens, together with the slender military force at the disposal of the authorities, the riot had been substantially quelled. The police displayed admirable address and undaunted bravery against overwhelming numbers; they were under the command of Thomas C. Acton, President of the Police Board, who

issued orders with the coolness and skill of a trained military veteran."

Mrs. Alger, pondering the whereabouts of her son, received from him this letter:

"I have never imagined anything so terrible as the scenes which are being enacted here. Thousands of men and women have gone out of their minds. They storm the streets, many of them armed, breaking into stores, attacking peaceful citizens without cause. They refuse to abide by the draft regulation and everything is in a fearful turmoil. There is no such thing as loyalty to country—the President is condemned and the South lauded. No one knows where it will end.

"Yesterday afternoon I saw a hundred enraged men attack a defenceless negro who ventured out. He was beaten unmercifully and nearly killed with kicks and blows. I felt like leaping into them—but what could one person do? For there was no one other than myself who seemed to feel like interfering. I do not know whether he was dead at the time or not, but they carried him to a post and hung him, cheering throughout as though they were attending a celebration. I grew sick at the sight and could have fainted. So disgusting—so revolting! Still now I am dizzy from the effect and have not eaten since. Loyal citizens will answer this outrage by joining the army without delay and tomorrow I shall be among them."

A premonition that Horatio would not be able to "be among them" prompted Mrs. Alger to send her husband to New York. The man came in time to find his son

delirious and suffering from a high fever. A physician was summoned and diagnosed the case as pneumonia.

So Horatio did not get into the army. . . .

Father and son, their misunderstandings cleared away, went back together to Massachusetts, where the younger Horatio convalesced. In the garden behind the house he sat and took counsel with himself and God. Old ambitions had deserted him. It was not writing he thought of now, but people with tortured souls who needed consolation. If God would only overlook and forgive his waywardness, his misdeeds—it might not be too late to take up His word. . . .

On December 8, 1864, Horatio Alger, Jr., was ordained pastor of the Unitarian Church at Brewster, Massachusetts.

In the evening, through a flutter of snow, he walked alone, for hours, and cried, thinking of Patience Stires.

His first sermon had to do with the War and ended with a blessing for the President.

His second sermon had to do with the President and ended with a blessing for the Army.

He thought this of Lincoln: that he was "beset with problems which should fall on no one man to solve"; that he was "of all men in the country the most devoted to the preservation of the Union"; that he was "not capable in a military way, but his cause is just and he cannot fail to witness the successful termination of the cause"; that he was "nothing if not honest, and as broad in his views as he is honest".

By his small congregation Alger was considered "gentle, solicitous of the welfare of others, and humble as it behooves one of the Lord's servants to be".

Once he eulogized in a sermon the men who spent their lives in literature. Only once, however, since the theme seemed incongruous somehow when brothers were thrusting bayonets into each other's hearts and blades of grass lay murky green in pools of blood.

Still, he reverted to literature. In the margins of the paper on which he scribbled his sermons, he jotted down plots for stories.

William T. Adams invited him to write for *Student & Schoolmate.* Which he began to do.

And the ministry irked him. More and more it galled him.

And soldiers were coming back crippled and scarred and torn, with nothing to look forward to; but they at least had done something . . . their lives had not been in vain. While his life——

He outlined the story of Ragged Dick.

He resigned his pulpit in March of '66 and moved to New York.

It cannot be denied that his father expressed contempt.

VI
WING—THE NAME OF A BOY

The Civil War had scarcely ceased to be, before the City of New York became the haven of refuge for hundreds of youngsters who had run away from country homes to do battle for Father Abraham. Boys who had gone to beat drums in the army of General Grant, given a taste of excitement, grew hungry for more, and to the old homesteads they were lost forever. They had gone to fight for the country and now, having fought, were going to see some of it. And where than in the metropolis, they reasoned, was a better point of vantage?

Many of these boys were still in knickers and some of them were no more than twelve and thirteen years old. Once in the city they were lost. With neither friends nor funds their situation developed to such a point that a few among them had to steal in order to eat. Although the police were cognizant of the suffering which was beginning to manifest itself within their ranks, the general public focussed its attention on their plight only when several of their number resorted to begging on the corners of important thoroughfares.

More alive to the situation than the city officials, Charles Loring Brace, who had founded the Newsboys' Lodging House * in 1853, invited the now homeless youths to make their headquarters in the lodging house and of this offer many of them took advantage. Quickly observing that other occupants of the House eked out a living by the sale of newspapers or by blacking boots, the newcomers soon divided themselves between these two occupations. If any of them had, after arrival in New York, some reawakening of desire for their country homes, it was quickly dissipated by the generous treatment which they received at the hands of Charles O'Connor who, since the inception of the lodging house, had been its superintendent. It was to O'Connor they went with their worries and their ailments, their confessions and their appeals, with their six pennies for supper and five pennies for a feather bed for the night.

The orderly routine of the House was completely upset with the influx of drummer boys. It became impossible for O'Connor alone to straighten out the topsy-turvy condition in which he was floundering; for assistance he called on Everett Jansen Wendell, a once famous Harvard athlete, who on several occasions had evinced a keen interest in the progress of the home. Wendell responded promptly and in a few weeks managed to eliminate most of the chaos by the simple expedient of issuing orders in an impressive bass and flourishing a barrel stave in his hand while he spoke. These gestures, however threatening, belied the charac-

* Now the Brace Memorial Newsboys' Home.



Charles Loring Brace,
Founder of the Newsboys' Home

ter of the man, for he was one of the sincerest friends the newsboys had. For three months he continued to exercise authority, jointly with O'Connor, during which period he introduced numerous reforms. A system of compulsory education was instituted by him, all occupants of the lodging house being obliged to spend several hours every week in classes which he himself taught. A bath per boy per week also became obligatory and one of the facts to which he later pointed with pride was that not a single boy left because of this ablutionary rite. Wendell established himself as censor of the books which came to the home and by this act practically all literature then current among the boys was barred from the rooms. In searching for suitable material for them to read he came upon an installment of *Ragged Dick,* then appearing serially in *Student & Schoolmate,* and recognized the value of the story to his charges. Immediately he set out to locate Alger, found him, and upon learning that Alger was planning to write a series of books of similar character, invited him to use the Newsboys' Lodging House as a source of inspiration.

From that time on the Newsboys' Lodging House became Alger's New York home. Officially he lived in several different places in the city, but those who knew him and wanted him on business sought him always in the Fulton Street abode above the office of the *Sun.* Personal matters caused Wendell soon to go away, but Alger missed him only slightly, since between himself and the superintendent O'Connor there was brewing a

friendship which overshadowed all else. O'Connor shared his office with the author, gave him access to all its records, made him a welcome guest. Little difficulty was experienced by Alger in becoming acquainted. A quiet, unobtrusive bearing permitted him to pass unmolested and without comment among the ranks. Gradually he made it a practice to stay for supper with the boys and, like them, paid the necessary pennies. When there was room he occupied a bed. The teaching which Wendell left off he resumed in a less organized but more enthusiastic way.

Fame & Fortune, Horatio's second book, was finished in the lodging house. Copies were distributed among the boys and its acclaim was immediate and great. Mention therein of streets they knew and haunts they frequented invested the volume with a personal touch and they recognized its application. The story was not for them alone, however, for endorsements poured in from every section of the country. Boys everywhere, in cities and on farms, voluntarily proffered their approval. "When you're writing fiction, you draw your characters from life," said William Patten, creator of Frank Merriwell, in a letter which appeared lately in the *Saturday Evening Post.* "But when you're writing for boys, you draw your characters from the imaginary world that boys live in. When I conceived Frank, I think I hit on approximately the boy that every kid would like to be. Not, mind you, the boy that every kid ought to be. That was the Horatio Alger idea—a

moral in every story. But my boy pointed no moral; he was just every boy's picture of himself."

The single fact that Alger's stories outsold Frank Merriwell is sufficient indication of something wrong with Mr. Patten's indictment of Alger's method. The truth is that Alger's heroes were just as his readers wanted themselves to be. They were not only part and parcel of the boys' imaginary world but had an additional factor in their favor: they were just close enough to life to be plausible. It is said that Frank Merriwell is the greatest publicity agent that Yale ever has had and that a great many of that university's students have been influenced in their selection by the unprecedented exploits of Frank. But has New York by any one been better publicized than by Alger? It is to be questioned whether New York even today would be so well served with bootblacks and newspaper vendors were it not for Alger's stories and their tendency to lure ambitious youngsters to its midst. Rather reluctantly does William Lewis Butcher, present managing executive of the Newsboys' Lodging House, admit that Alger's stories have caused and still cause more boys to run away from home than any other circumstance with which he is familiar.

Alger's heroes never were perfect. By endowing them with some slight vices he brought them nearer to his readers. They swore a little, fibbed a little, and indulged sometimes in gambling. No one will be so rash as to credit Alger with a keen insight into the juvenile mind but neither will any one with reason discount

the magnetism of his pattern. "Now, almost with regret, I find myself closing up the record of Dick's checkered career," the author wrote on completing *Fame & Fortune.* "The past with its trials is over; the future expands before him, a bright vista of merited success." The boy reader sighs, a tear trickles from the corner of his eye and leaves a streak across his cheek, and he wonders if ever in all this world there will be another lad like Ragged Dick. But only briefly will he wonder, for *Mark, the Match Boy* is already on the press!

O'Connor was profuse in his felicitations. Ministers wrote to express their satisfaction. Alger was deluged with congratulatory messages, so much so that he expressed a desire to retire for a while and write a novel for adults. His contract with A. K. Loring made this impossible. Finally, with a resignation that was essentially a pose, he renewed his labor. O'Connor was with him often, lending encouragement. O'Connor, as a matter of record, is entitled to whatever blame or credit attaches to the Alger tales. Adams started Alger, but O'Connor kept him going. He was forever appearing with an anecdote about this boy and that which was, he insisted, splendid material for further books.

Alger and O'Connor became inseparable. Many evenings they spent together, the superintendent drawing on a cigar, the author chewing candy, discussing ways and means for improvements in the House. On the streets they were pointed out as the protectors of New York's youth, a designation which Alger hugely en-

joyed. In summer they strolled together along the water's edge at the Battery and Alger spoke to his companion of the time he spent in Paris.

In the years that ensued Alger became more and more a figure closely identified with life among the newsboys. The newsboys themselves regarded him with an attitude that was scorn and admiration mingled. For his charity they loved him, for his inability to detect an imposition they ridiculed him. He lent them money which was seldom repaid. Newcomers he set up in business, furnishing them with funds for papers or for blacking boxes. He saw that they wrote letters home—those of them who could write. At any time of day or night he knew where they could be found. On numerous occasions he took droves of them to eat with him in the middle of the day. One of his pleasures at the time was to ride around in a carriage, visiting the boys at the ferry entrances and street corners which were their places of business. He was an invaluable aid to the police, who relied on him for aid in locating boys reported among the missing.

In the lodging house itself Alger was the general comforter, the nurse, the tribunal at which bickerings were settled. When boys were ill he attended them; saw that the doctor's instructions were scrupulously pursued; read to them and talked to them and kept their courage up. When a boy died, he was the presiding dignitary. The sermon was delivered by him and the rites at the Lutheran Cemetery, in Brooklyn, were under his direction.

Now and then a boy with a vicious streak turned up, but Alger was the last to condemn him. One such instance on record concerns a boy of fifteen who, accused of picking pockets, was held for trial. Alger proclaimed the boy's innocence for him and, as the boy swore he had no knowledge of the crime, berated the police for what he termed persecution. He hired a lawyer to handle the case and was prepared to have the newspapers take up the matter in stirring fashion. The incipient contest would have thrilled him but it did not come to pass. After holding out bravely for a week the boy confessed.

Idiosyncrasies were ever to play a part in Horatio's life. A flair for the Bohemian was deeply imbedded in his nature, and during the course of his existence at the Newsboys' Lodging House he indulged himself to the full. Stories of a certain lime-kiln man had come to Alger's attention and by the publicity which attached to that individual he was intrigued to the extent of wanting to emulate him. "The Lime-kiln-Man," observes Stephen Jenkins in his book *The Greatest Street in the World,* "was a familiar figure to the street arabs and a sphinx to the newspaper men. Sturdy, with long beard, and large blue eyes, having an appearance of education and of former refinement, he had deliberately chosen to make himself an outcast. It was said that he slept in the lime-kilns that then existed in the neighborhood of Gansevoort Street, and his shabby clothes, and even his long beard, at times bore witness to the whiteness of his rough-and-ready bedding. He neither

sought nor shunned human society, and was fond of a stroll down Broadway. To us boys he was a fascinating terror."

Purchasing for himself a wig, becoming possessed—by means no longer remembered—of a cape, Alger presented, as he forged an ambling gait along Broadway at night, an appearance of a male hag escaped from some Hallowe'en. No one was supposed to know that Alger when the spirit moved him went arrayed in that weird costume. Yet everybody connected with the House did know, and Alger knew they knew, and secretly was pleased because this, he felt, was mystery and glamor and properly belonged in the vicinity of art and one of its representatives. After a while O'Connor grew accustomed to his friend's excursions but at first he was inclined to discredit his sanity. So thoroughly convinced was he of Alger's mission in the world that he overlooked most of his faults and begrudged him none of his whimsies. To those who made inquiries he explained the man's eccentricity by saying he was in search of color for his stories and that, disguised, he had a better chance of finding what he needed. The explanation was reasonable but far from being true. It is much more likely that Alger, in his odd raiment, with the eyes of the multitude upon him, felt in his own mind that he was being great. The Freudians, it may be supposed, would have had with him a glorious adventure.

The Newsboys' Lodging House boasted of a band. Alger managed, as often as was possible without appearing to be greedy, to beat a drum. The enormous

pleasure he derived from this participation in the playing was out of all proportion to his value as a player, but he was too important a factor in the lives of those he played with to be made aware of his deficiencies. He seldom lost an opportunity to march with the band when it was called upon to take part in some parade. Owen Bailey, a reporter for the *Herald,* thought that Alger beating a drum in a band composed of children was just an extraordinary fool. Owen Bailey made it a point once to let Alger know his trend of thought. Alger raised his arm to strike, which was the precise gesture for which Bailey had been waiting. He hurled Alger to the floor and stunned him. After that Bailey was banned from the lodging house.

On Chatham Square, in the winter of 1873, Mr. Alger first met Wing. A heavy snow had fallen the night before and inspired a mob of urchins with the idea of pelting all the Chinamen they could see. Their delight was boundless when they engaged in combat a Chinese boy some ten years old. While several of their number held him, others washed his face with snow. Tiring of this, they stretched him on the ground and were using him as the mould for an horizontal snow man when Horatio happened to see the object of their torture. Exhibiting an ardor that was rare for him, he rushed among the boys and valiantly effected the rescue of their victim. Wing couldn't talk in English, couldn't say who he was or where he lived. He muttered incoherently a word that sounded like Wing and from that he

got the name he bore thereafter. Alger took him in his arms and carried him to the lodging house, there to have him dried and fed. That night Wing slept in the lodging house, and the night following, and on every night for three years after that. Wing became in effect Horatio Alger's son.

In the beginning Alger was drawn to the boy by nothing more than a ready sympathy. He made the necessary inquiries to ascertain his parentage but they availed him nothing. Nobody wanted Wing. Nobody seemed to know that he was lost. So Horatio Alger kept him by his side and saw the child's frequent wistful smile. In time he taught the boy the English language. To the other boys in the lodging house the actions of Mr. Alger were queer but not to be interfered with. His decision to be Wing's sponsor was respected, without resentment—because his bounties included them all—but not without curiosity. That boy who sought a special favor from Alger had only to be especially kind to Wing and his request was as good as granted.

Wing would have become Horatio's personal slave, so deep was his devotion. But Alger would have none of that: he tried to make the boy the equal of his white-faced comrades. Alger taught Wing a prayer and knelt with him before his cot each night as he repeated it. Over the protests of O'Connor he refused to send Wing out to work. He paid the boy's expenses, bought his clothes, bestowed a father's love. Then, fearing that he might again become the object of a street assault, he subsidized Timothy Grogan, a policeman whose terri-

tory included that around the lodging house—paying him to keep a viligant eye on the Chinese youth whenever he ventured into the street. Grogan took this assignment seriously and Wing never for a moment was alone. Wherever he went, there too went Timothy the copper. When Wing ran, Timothy lengthened his stride.

Horatio Alger had not known such happiness before. His mind was at peace, his heart was gay, his health had never been better. Wing was the mainspring of this happiness, and Wing never doubted that Horatio was his father. Owen Bailey was one who did not doubt it either, but Bailey had a grievance.

Late in the afternoon of August 17th in the year 1877, Alger sent Wing on an errand from which he was late in returning. His non-appearance at supper time caused Alger some surprise but no concern. As darkness approached he made some inquiries and then set out in the direction of what was to have been the boy's destination. Soon he learned that the message had not been delivered. Hastily he went to the police station to get hold of Grogan but it happened to be Grogan's day off. The precinct chief promised to let Grogan spend all of the following day in a search. That night Alger did not sleep.

When morning came he explained to Grogan the details of Wing's disappearance and pleaded with him to find the child. The boys from the lodging house he organized into searching parties and offered a reward of twenty-five dollars to him who would be first to come with news. The man himself preserved a fierce, a rigid

quietness of manner that betrayed the tempestuous emotion which he was undergoing. Alger was trying to find Wing; ostensibly that was his only purpose. In reality, and in part he knew it, he was trying to save himself. Was he, he wondered, always to lose those whom he held dear? Who was this man Ingersoll of whom he had been hearing?

The bitterness that that day welled up in Alger's heart was like a torrential flood of water upon a verdant shore. A part of the good of him was swept away and something like a tinge of spleen usurped its place. The fringes of his hair turned white that day. His eyes closed ever so slightly.

As darkness fell on the second day his hopes reversed themselves. "I hope they have nothing to report," he said to O'Connor as boys began to return from their quest. He seemed to sense that news, if it came, could tell him only what he did not wish to hear. And so it was, though the information was brought by Grogan, after night had fallen and the Newsboys' Lodging House was stilled with its habitual after-prayer-time silence. Grogan told O'Connor and O'Connor, gently as he could, told Alger.

In front of the German Thalia Theatre, on Broadway just below Spring, the hall that used to house Wood's Minstrels and where later Harrigan and Hart produced the Mulligan Guards—in front of 514 Broadway, at five o'clock in the evening of the day preceding, the Chinese boy Wing had his bowels kicked out when he fell under the hoofs of a runaway horse.

VII
CITY CHORES

Alger found an antidote to boredom in frequent dashes to dens in Chinatown where, accompanied by his police friend Grogan, he allowed his mind to become saturated with scenes of vice the like of which were to be witnessed in no other place in the country. Out of these Mott Street and Pell Street invasions was born an idea which kept Horatio in a state of turmoil for many days on end. "A vivid, startling picture of the Orient in New York," begins a hectic entry in his diary which, for the occasion, usurps the function of a notebook. "Chinatown, its dirt, its disease, chaos, brawls, crimes. Passion, lust, viciousness. A terrifying prospect. Sin and Sin and Sin. Yet some beautiful souls are there no doubt. And one of these has a dream. I will call the book *Opium, the Story of a Dream.* I must commence work at once."

He began work by calling on Henry Clapp, an editor of the short-lived *Saturday Press,* who was reputed to be possessed of much of Chinatown's secret history. Clapp was writing when Alger arrived but he invited the author to come in and wait until he finished a piece of copy. In a few moments he turned to Alger. "If

you have come to see me on business," he said, with an affected look of despair, "I am in no position to hear you. Here, sir," he continued mournfully, handing Alger the placard on which he had been making an inscription, "you will read the tragic news. I am just about to tack it on the door."

Alger accepted the placard and read: "The *Saturday Press* is obliged to discontinue publication for lack of funds; by a curious coincidence, the very reason for which it was started." It is to be hoped that Horatio smiled. In any event, he described briefly the purpose of his visit, which was to enlist the editor's aid in the preparation of manuscript for the newly conceived book.

"I'll tell you," remarked Clapp, presently, "the hour has come when the stomachs of all good men require sustenance. Let us adjourn to Charley's place, where I expect to meet some of my friends, and there we can discuss the project more fully."

Just north of Bleecker Street, on Broadway, in a dismal, candle-lighted cellar, was the eating establishment of Charley Pfaff, and to this hovel Alger and Henry Clapp made their way. To this hovel, because of Clapp's wit and jolly spirit, and possibly because of the enormous schooners of beer and delectable cheese sandwiches, great writers and famous Bohemians of the day also turned their footsteps. That evening Alger was introduced to Chester Foll, hailed as "The Great White Lie" and renowned for his recital of adventures in Topsyturvia; Alden Hawley, narrator of obscene stories, esteemed under the cognomen of "Once Upon a

Time"; the poet Walt Whitman, fondly referred to by the patrons of Pfaff's as "The Double W"; and Noah P. Garrick, horse fancier and student of the arts, greeted affectionately as "Woah-Noah." Books of etiquette had not then the vogue they enjoy today, so conversation at the table revolved about topics and personalities—chiefly the latter—on nearly all of which Horatio was uninformed. His bearing during the meal created astonishment; silence was something to which these diners were not accustomed, but silence was all that Horatio had to offer. He was awed and dismayed by the knowledge of men and events which those about him possessed and discoursed on; even the vital subject on which he had come to consult Clapp escaped his memory, so engrossed was he in words which fell from others' lips. Smoking and drinking ensued, and when at length he noticed that Alger partook of neither, Clapp rose and solemnly put an arm about his shoulder. "Behold," he announced in stentorian voice, "among the sinners doth a saint appear!"

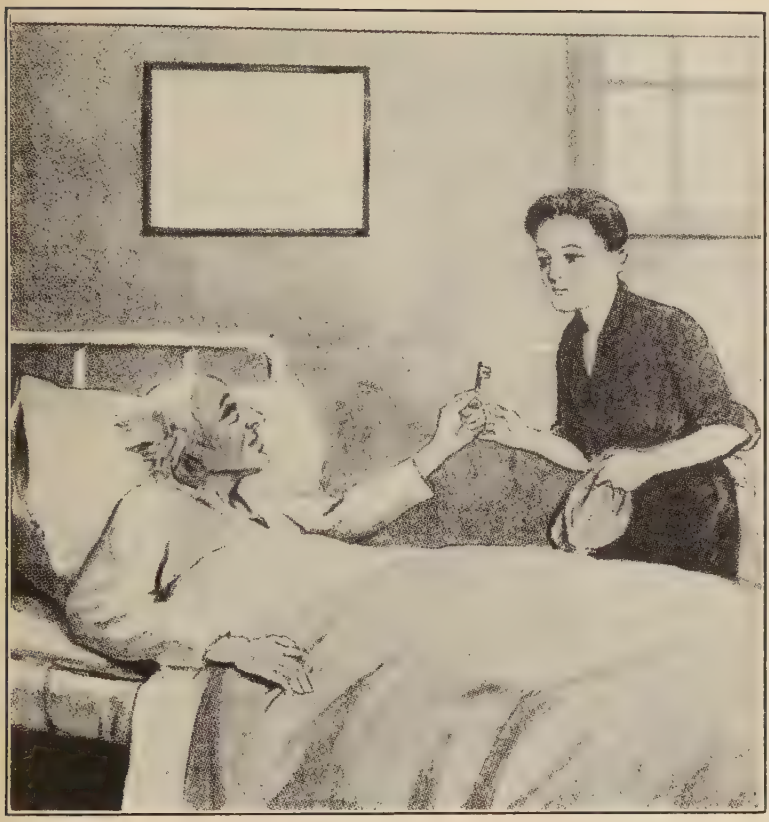
Alger surmised that this company was not for him. And it was not. He forgot about *Opium, the Story of A Dream,* but he was imbued with another idea which he did not forsake so readily. He was determined from then on to know more about those who were acknowledged celebrities and he vowed that nothing should stand between him and the knowledge he so desperately desired. A visit to the Astor House was incorporated as part of his daily regimen, a rite which he dared not leave unperformed, because there, while in New York,

stopped the men and women who represented the greatness of the time. There Lincoln had stopped, and Daniel Webster and Henry Clay; and there, brandishing the literary torch, stopped Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Washington Irving. At the hostelry was a desk clerk named Edwin Sterne, by whom, for a weekly stipend, Alger was advised of notable arrivals, and who pointed out to him such persons as they passed to and from the lobby. Because of this penchant for stealing glimpses of those who lived in fame, Horatio came to be a familiar figure in the hotel. Much of fame he saw, but to none of it did he speak; his shyness in the presence of higher intellects precluded any personal approach.

Clubs, societies, organized groups of any nature, held for Alger a fascination which never was diminished. Wherever was something joinable, that Alger joined. He was, for example, a member of the Actors' Benevolent Association; the Society for the Suppression of Vice and of the Editors' and Publishers' Guild; of the New York Police Captains' Association; of the Association for the Development of Port Facilities; of the American Educational Alliance and the Bowery Boys and the Quill Club and the Chat Club and the Ding Dang Dong Club. He almost joined Ye Twilight Club which, organized in 1883 by Charles W. Wingate, a prominent business man of the city, had no constitution, no officers, no dues, no speeches, no axes to grind, no nothing. But Horatio, during the first meeting he attended—they did have meetings at the St. Denis

Hotel, but only for the purpose of seeing who could eat the most food—during that first meeting Horatio attempted to initiate a political discussion and entrée thereafter was denied him.

Such humiliating incidents were rare. Usually Horatio Alger was a welcome member because without complaint he bore his share of expenses, and sometimes more, and made no effort to interfere with established policies. And yet his attendance at clubs where good cheer was the first consideration served to dampen the ardor of members who were around him. What was there in the personality of Mr. Alger that invariably caused men to weigh their words in his hearing and put a restraint on their actions in his seeing? He was retiring, quiet of speech, devoid of any suggestion of aggressiveness; nevertheless frivolity slackened its pace when he was an onlooker. The precise nature of his individuality alone would have been easy to gauge; but his authorship—not the fact, but the nature of it—introduced a complicated note. His service in the ministry was known to few, but the preacher-like quality of his books, their moral tone, produced the same effect. His books exuded a puritanical atmosphere that men could not help but associate also with him. Alger was more in men's minds than in their mouths; more in their thoughts than in the press. They spoke and read of Anthony Comstock, whose antics and activities were those of a professional reformer resolved on publicity, but they considered with more profound respect the perennially lengthening list of Horatio Alger stories



Cover for an Alger opus:

Tom, The Bootblack
or, A Western Boy's Success

which they conceived to be part of a God-fearing man's morality campaign.

Alger was, by accident, a symbol. His capacity, however, was limited and he confined himself to goody-goody books for boys. How could the public separate what was from what Alger himself hoped could be? No one saw him except as a preceptor of better moral standards. With every book he wrote a preachment, what opportunity had the general public to see him but as the saintly person which a reading of his books portrayed? Unwittingly he was the model for Victorian forces in America and around him, were he oratorically inclined, would have rallied all the evil-chasing exponents of the age. As it was, he remained the emblem while more vociferous individuals were hired to espouse his cause from platforms and in the anterooms of state legislatures and of Congress.

Y. M. C. A.'s filled their shelves with his books. Sunday schools awarded them as prizes. The "Horatio Alger boy" was synonymous with all that was good and pure. Few ministers passed through New York without calling to see him. Presumed to be acquainted with conditions of vice prevailing in the metropolis—but actually ignorant of them—he was, in 1871, appointed chairman of the Anti-Vice Commission by Mayor A. Oakey Hall. In 1877 he was invited by Mayor Smith Ely to participate in a conference on crime elimination. On a dozen other commissions and committees he served, too, but the only recommendation he made at any time was for an enlargement of the police force.

Regardless of his ineffectual service, Alger experienced a childish delight in his appointments. Each tender resembled a new toy that, smiling to himself the while, he turned over and over and displayed proudly before his friends. As for delving into the problems the existence of which gave rise to his appointments—that was a task beyond his ken. Besides, he could not afford to let investigations, irrespective of their importance, hamper his search for masterpiece copy. He much preferred to follow fire engines and ride on horse cars and go to Barnum's Museum.

"Gigantic conflagration on Pearl Street," he reports. "Warehouse in flames that reached the clouds. A beautiful, clear evening so that everything visible. A dangerous task to go through the flames and smoke but the brave men did and I was of a mind to applaud. Two men injured, one with a broken skull and taken to the hospital, and one lady slightly hurt by part of wall that fell to the road. Rode back on engine."

He rode back on the engine. And then went home. A few succeeding hours passed in rapturous contemplation of the thrilling scene he had witnessed. Then drowsiness overtook him and he tried to sleep. Tried to sleep, but could not for there was a something coming once again to life that he thought was long since dead. Perhaps the flames that reached the clouds earlier in the night had burned away a veil and presented to view two faces out of the past. Alger rises and walks about his room. He grows weary of his pacing and crouches at his desk. Two faces peer at him, both smiling at him,

both evoking memories. A pretty girl from Boston and a wistful-eyed boy Chink. Horatio reaches for his pen and draws a line under his entry of the fire.

"Later," he wrote, "much later. I am not alone now. Wing is with me, and Patience. I see them clearly again here beside me. Is Patience talking? *Is Patience talking!* God, do I hear her voice! Do I hear Wing? Or are my senses leaving me."

While he speculates, his head droops forward and rests upon the desk. His eyes close, the pen slips from his hand and he sleeps. He is alone once more, till morning.

The morning comes, of a depressing grey. Today Horatio will not leave his room on Twenty-sixth Street. He will not go to the Newsboys' Lodging House. He will not attend a scheduled meeting of the Society for the Physical Development of Young Men. He will stay in his room and carry Harry Raymond further along in *Sink or Swim,* and he will meditate. For once he follows through a planned course of action. He writes a little and then prepares for meditation. What is the prospect that his mind revolves on? What was, what is, what will be? Reaching into the recesses of memory, piercing sealed-up sanctums of his heart, at length he is ready for summation: Patience is gone and Wing is gone, but there *is* something to live for. The novel—the momentous novel—which is to place him among the immortals. On the pages of his diary he wonders if the time is not now ripe to lay aside this juvenile literature, never to take it up again—to con-

centrate from now until it is done on the book that will endear him to posterity. Poor Alger! He dreams the day away and night finds him completing the manuscript for which his publisher is waiting. "But," he wrote gallantly, as a conclusion to the story, "if ever reverses should come, we are sure that Harry, keeping in mind his old motto, 'Sink or Swim', would bear up bravely, and turn defeat into victory."

Not only ministers called to see Horatio Alger in New York. He was obliged to receive men who never had been to the city before, but who, impressed with the knowledge he was reputed to have, consulted him about sightseeing tours. Such frequent mention is made in his books of streets and places that he fairly earned the title bestowed on him by Philip Bauman—a reporter for the *Brooklyn Eagle*— of "The Society for the Prevention of Getting Lost". No matter who he was or where he came from, the stranger found in Alger a gracious host. Calling on him and saying one had sought him out especially was equivalent to receiving open sesame to the city; for Alger took the stranger in hand and out of his own pocket paid for the horse and cab that showed them 'round. Without fail they drove by streets where were boys who knew him well, and who raised their caps to him or otherwise saluted; and thus was aided and abetted the Alger legend which took root in the land in the beloved nineteenth century.

For a brief interval there was a shop on Ann Street which never failed to be included among the points of

interest. "There," Mr. Alger would say, "is one of the oldest mercantile establishments in our city. It is a curio shop. You may purchase within its limited area the oddest relics made anywhere in the whole world." He would pause then a moment to see that his guest was duly impressed. With a slight, affectedly simple gesture of the hand, he would next ask, "Shall we go in, sir? It is interesting, I assure you. I, sir, own the shop."

Yes, Horatio was also a merchant. It happened quite casually, without a deal of forethought, and all because a flower-pot with stripes running round it caught Mr. Alger's fancy. The flower-pot happened to be in the window of the curio shop owned by Albert Zotto, a Hungarian, and Alger went in to buy it. General conversation developed, during the course of which he made known his identity. Zotto went into ecstasies over the honor of serving so illustrious a patron. He had two sons, both of whom read Alger's stories with an avidity that astounded their parent and caused him to entertain a high respect for the writer. Alger, making a promise, returned at a later date in order to meet the boys. Their presence alone was sufficiently entertaining to Horatio but was not the reason which prompted his many visits to the shop thereafter. In the rear, sheltered from view of the rest of the store, was a mahogany desk, surmounted with carved gargoyles and conveying an atmosphere of an ancient and honorable past. A great longing filled Alger's soul. He wanted that desk more than anything in the world, but Zotto

wanted just as badly to keep it. However, the privilege of using it was granted him and for two years most of his writing was performed there. At the end of that time Albert Zotto declared his intention of returning with his family to Hungary. He advertised the store for sale and though some came to look at it, none remained to buy. The situation was discouraging. The shop barely paid expenses while he kept it, and all the time there was waiting for him abroad a commercial appointment which he was eager to accept. Of course there was nothing else for Alger to do under the circumstances but buy the shop himself. He paid twelve hundred dollars for it. Paying was the easiest part. After that he had to run it, a task which he relinquished in a month. There were recommended to him, as possible managers of the store, two sailors who proclaimed themselves tired of the sea and willing to undertake anything which would give them a start on land. Thomas Dunning and Thomas Polk—"My two Thomases," Alger called them—became the managers under Horatio's most irregular supervision. As all my young readers are aware, the fascination of the sea for a sailor never dies. The two Thomases went back and in their hurry neglected to advise Mr. Alger. Because of the pressure of other matters it would have been necessary for Horatio to sell the store had not the merchandise in it also gone out to sea.

"Finally he has given up that stupid store of his," wrote Donald Malone, who, representing Porter & Coates, Alger's new publishers, was required to see that

the author's manuscripts were submitted on time. "We ought to have a contract which forbids him to do anything but write and then he ought to be locked in a cell to do it. He gets more ridiculous notions about doing things than seems possible. I think he prefers anything to keeping his contract because I find him anywhere but home and doing everything but writing. I am not sure we wouldn't do better to have a nurse here, instead of me, to take care of him. Unless he changes his mind I am to dine with him this evening and I will advise as early as possible about a new schedule."

Not the least important part of Malone's letter is the postscript: "P. S. Alger wants to know if we would be interested in a novel from him. He says he has one in mind."

As for getting a nurse, Malone's suggestion was rather unnecessary. Alger had a nurse—at least she amounted to one—in the person of Katherine Marshall, who kept house for him on those occasions when he felt like having a home of his own in preference to rooming out. She cooked for him, reminded him of appointments, urged him to sleep and woke him up, all as a faithful nurse must. Her greatest usefulness, however, came when Alger was ill, which was often. He was susceptible to colds and a throat ailment; the winter weather confined him to bed and the tender care of Miss Kate. For her diligence and good heartedness, Miss Kate—though she had neither children nor husband—was Horatio Alger's model for a mother in some half dozen stories.

Public speaking, it has been observed already, was not one of the author's strong points. The reason for this lay not merely in a platform-shyness and an inherent lack of bearing, but also in the subjects—ranging from political economy and the elimination of financial panics to "Robert Ingersoll—Man or Devil?"—which he elected to speak on. Dubious as Horatio was about his ability to be interesting, he felt he had nothing to lose by these appearances. Was it not all good publicity for The Book? Wouldn't the ever increasing acquaintanceship have a salutary effect on It when ultimately It came?

The Northeastern Conference of Ministers, convening in New York in 1877, listened to an address by Alger which, unofficially, it characterized as tommyrot, not to say absurd and fantastic. Nevertheless it was one of the soundest talks the man had ever made. Seeing they did not take to it kindly, he discarded it and it never was repeated. The Conference was assembled to discuss newer methods for religious education for children. First of all, Alger pictured some of the boys he knew at the Newsboys' Lodging House. He denied they had run away from home, as had been implied, because of lack of religious instruction. Religious instruction, he held, was indispensable, but he referred to other things of equal importance. Thinking back to his own childhood, he referred to the necessity for play, for freedom to exercise buoyant spirits, and for understanding. Religious instruction, he explained, would not make a boy God-fearing unless he believed that God was kind

rather than cruel, as so many ministers were in the habit of painting Him. Before trying to save the boys, he urged that the ministers assembled go out and meet them and talk with them; before attempting to elevate them spiritually, he recommended that they eat with the boys and play with them. . . . Add, then, to the bag of incidents which weighs Alger down to mediocrity, a conviction which he had not the courage to repeat.

"Last week I addressed the body of ministers gathered here," he wrote to his father, "and regret you were unable to attend. I was forced to the conclusion that the trend of my observations, though interesting to them, did not meet with their approval. That, however, was something I could not foretell in advance or I would have chosen something else. I hesitate to go into detail because you will hear from Mr. Parker all that transpired."

Horatio, Sr. replied shortly. "From Mr. Parker I am led to believe that your address was invested with a radicalism hardly befitting the occasion. I agree with him that the need of the hour is for stricter discipline to counteract the ever-spreading tide of waywardness which we find exhibited in children in all walks of life."

It was very rare for Horatio to receive any comment on his conduct from his father. But when it came he regarded it with an assumption of good-natured tolerance. Long, long years had passed since the opinions of the elder had had any influence on his own course of action. There had sprung up, indeed, a relationship less cordial than usually exists between father and son. Visits home

became scarcer as Alger advanced in public esteem; in a measure correspondence covered the gap, though on the son's part there was absent the warmth which would have made the father glad. Not consciously, perhaps, did Horatio fail to respond to the close kinship which his father desired; but he felt, however subconsciously, that life for him was not what life might have been had his father been less considerate of God and more considerate of him.

However he refrained from comment on Horatio the man, the father could not resist the impulse to enter into lengthy criticisms of Horatio the author. Having been thwarted in his intention to make and keep his son a minister, he hoped to guide his career as a writer.

"You did not sufficiently emphasize the religious training he had," wrote his father, referring to James Garfield as portrayed in *From Canal Boy to President.* "You could do a more estimable service to the country by giving all possible prominence to religious traits which have been instrumental in shaping the lives of its leaders."

"Dear Father," wrote Horatio, slightly angry, in reply, "You perhaps know a great deal more about Garfield than I do. I am sure the possibilities of the subject have not been exhausted. I shall look forward to reading your own life of him."

The old man was taken ill and made no retort. Thinking perhaps that he had unduly offended his father, Horatio set to work to re-establish cordial relations. His few words of good cheer were mailed in time

to reach South Natick on November 6th, his father's birthday. That birthday, in 1881, proved to be a death-day, also. For shortly after two o'clock in the morning Horatio Alger, Sr. went to his final rest.

To complete the record of Horatio Alger's residence in New York, there must be presented the story of his connection with the children's theatre movement, for that, more than anything else, pointed a way to greater fame and received from him more sustained attention and application than any of his numerous other projects. It is in itself a picture of his life in miniature—an history of conception, of attempt and of failure.

Over a period of two or three years during which she had made several unsuccessful attempts to establish a children's theatre in Chicago, Virginia Barry took up her residence in New York and first came in contact with Mr. Alger during an Independence Day celebration at City Hall to which he had escorted a group of boys. The author was excited over the tale of Miss Barry's undertaking. Stimulated by the possibility of inaugurating a children's theatre in New York, he began to think of ways and means for launching there a similar project. He advanced the idea to Miss Barry, who was willing to aid him, but she expressed so much skepticism at the chances of success that he decided to wait. One of the obstacles on which the woman laid particular stress was the need for sufficient capital, without which, she said, it would be useless even to begin. Whatever the amount, Alger was in no position at the

time to furnish it from his own funds. But it was not long before he met Gustav Reinbeck, a German of substantial means, to whom he spoke so earnestly that a promise of financial support was soon forthcoming.

There ensued a number of conferences between Alger and Reinbeck, at which the former submitted definite plans for the venture. Miss Barry and he were to write the first play, which would be based on the life of Abraham Lincoln, with a cast to be drawn from the ranks of newsboys with whom Alger was familiar. Reinbeck was to pay all expenses, a nominal salary to the boys for time taken off from work, a weekly fee to Miss Barry for acting as coach, and the cost of scenery and the renting of a theatre. At the expiration of six months the collaborators had assembled the necessary data concerning Lincoln and were prepared to proceed with the writing of the play. Then it was that Alger found himself far behind in his regular writing schedule, several urgent messages from his publishers making him keenly aware of his obligations to them. Alger explained the cause of his delay, whereupon the publishers suggested he hastily do a story on Abraham Lincoln, based on the material already collected. This seemed reasonable and in two weeks he had turned out *The Backwoods Boy*. As soon as Miss Barry learned of this she flew into a rage, declaring he had no right to make such use of facts which she had helped to secure. Nothing that Alger could do or say would pacify the woman and she severed all connections with him.

Disheartened, but resolved not to abandon the idea,

Alger endeavored to write the play alone. It proved a task beyond his powers and he gave it up in favor of a musical play for children which he hoped to have some one else prepare. Here again he failed. No one on whom he called could be made to see the plan in the glowing terms he described. Still refusing to acknowledge defeat, he gave his attention to a pageant which would depict the history of the United States. There were to be no speaking parts—everything was to depend on scenery. Finding that Mr. Reinbeck was still willing to advance the money, Alger brought together a group of newsboys and tried to organize them for their thespian duties. A sign painter named Binsky was hired to do the scenery. This proved to be an unhappy selection since Binsky's knowledge, to be charitable, was meagre. His execution of Henry Hudson sailing up the river was characterized by Alger as "awfully atrocious". The last straw came when Binsky found it impossible to keep the "Indians on Manhattan Island" from "looking like Hebrews".

Delays and misunderstandings broke Reinbeck's spirit first and then Alger's. He who was to have been the financial godfather renounced all affiliation with the children's theatre movement when, at the conclusion of the second year, he saw preliminaries still under way. Up to that time he had been called upon to underwrite but very few expenses, yet he gathered that additional contributions would produce a not much greater result. So he withdrew. Already Alger was tired and gladly

enough he followed suit. What if nothing tangible had been performed? Was he not better off for having tried —hadn't he added to his store of experience? In this fashion he reasoned.

VIII
CRUSADE

Not all slaves have worn black skins nor have the "free" states of the North been always free. In cities like New York and Boston and Chicago there was extant, for many years, a form of bondage not less pernicious —often more so—than was rooted deep in the soil of Dixie. That it flourished unmolested over several decades while Way Down East was burning powder below the Potomac, is a serio-comic phenomenon which this biographer—who is not an historian—chooses to mention but not discourse upon. It is sufficient here to observe that the padrone system is no more; that it is beyond the ken—has, indeed, never entered the consciousness of—the present generation; that Horatio Alger perceived its despicable depredations, hated with every last crevice of his soul its grinding tyranny, and was chief among those who caused it gradually to vanish before a slowly angering public. Let it also here be observed that this hammering and hacking away and pulling out and tearing down, which Alger did, was, of all his sixty-seven years of doing things, the most constructive.

The padrone system had many ramifications. The United States Department of Labor in 1897 referred to it as "that vicious and detestable method of manipulating Italian immigration labor through the agency of unscrupulous bosses." The Ford Committee, identified with the Fiftieth Congress, made an investigation and report in the wake of which, according to a statement by the Superintendent of Immigration in 1894, "the padrone changed his manner of doing business. He became, ostensibly, an Italian banker, and now conducts his affairs secretly through agents or bosses, both in Italy and the United States." The padrone, however, with whom we are concerned, was a man—usually an Italian—who imported from his native country boys whom he taught to play on harps or fiddles, compelling them, when they had learned, to ply their art on street corners and in yards in back of homes. Such money as they collected was turned over to the master—the padrone—who in a majority of cases stipulated a sum below which they dared not fall under penalty of fierce beatings. From *Phil, the Fiddler,* written by Horatio Alger in 1871 and published in the year succeeding, these excerpts are indulged in for a further explanation of the system:

"Most of the little Italian musicians to be found on our streets are brought from Calabria, the southern portion of Italy, where they are purchased from their parents, for a fixed sum, or rate of annual payment. . . . Even where the contract is for a limited term of years, the boys in five cases out of ten are not returned at the

appointed time. A part, unable to bear the hardships and privations of the life upon which they enter, are swept off by death, while of those that survive, a part are weaned from their homes, or are not permitted to go back. . . . The little Italian musician must remain in the street till near midnight, and then, after a long and fatiguing day, he is liable to be beaten and sent to bed without his supper, unless he brings home a satisfactory sum of money. . . . These boys are wont to regard the padrone as above the law. His power seems to them absolute, and they never dream of any interference. And, indeed, there is some reason for their cherishing this opinion. However brutal his treatment, I know of no case where the law has stepped in to rescue the young victim. . . . And this white slavery—for it merits no better name—is permitted by the law of two great nations. Italy is in fault in suffering this traffic in her children of tender years, and America is guilty as well in not interfering, as she might, at all events, to abridge the long hours of labor required of these boys, and forcing their cruel guardians to give them some instruction. . . . Of one hundred Italian children who are sold by their parents into this white slavery, but twenty ever return home; thirty grow up and adopt various occupations abroad, and fifty succumb to maladies produced by privation and exposure."

For initiating the exposé into the methods of the padroni, credit belongs to George Nelson Maverick, a dry goods merchant of Newark, New Jersey, whose business brought him to New York where he became

cognizant of the outrages being perpetrated on the foreign youngsters. His indignation burst forth in letters to the newspapers; his fury was aroused when he found them ignored. Being of a practical turn of mind, however, he reasoned that a man who specialized in the study of life among street urchins would lend an attentive ear; whereupon he introduced himself to Alger. It was Maverick who raised the flag, Horatio Alger who waved it.

The vendor of dry goods, mistaking Alger's popularity among boy readers for influence among makers of laws, suggested that he do something in a hurry. His vanity tickled, Alger readily promised action. First-hand information being essential for a proper pleading of the case, he agreed to relinquish his regular labors for a period of several days in order to corral it. Gaily he went forth, with the spirit of an amateur crusader, hoping to find something exciting, not dreaming the expedition before long would wring his heart, or cause his head to be bashed, or his faith in Unitarianism crushed, or project him into a position of civic prominence and cause him to be surrounded by friends spontaneously created and beset with enemies whose hatred the glitter of stilettos more than once bespoke.

"Now this is getting to be a serious matter." (Alger is writing to his Newark friend.) "The evidence of malicious treatment which I have seen so far, if it is a fair sample, is unholy and must be stopped. The leaders must be punished. Why, I saw a boy fourteen years old, weighing 50 pounds, starved and weak, also

mentally deficient. I met him ten o'clock at night, afraid to go home. He only had collected 60 cents. Dear friend Maverick, let me find further evidence of this padrone business and I swear to you that if more of it is like what I know now, I will not rest until the curse is wiped away and until every right minded man and woman screams in protest at this foul thing whose stench makes me sick. Let me uncover other facts of like import and I will not rest until New York is purged and every mishandled child set free."

Already, it may be seen, there is a quickening of his pulse. He senses injustice and with nerves drawn taut resumes the hunt. Picking up Giacomo—later to play a part in *Phil, the Fiddler*—he trails after him on his rounds, patiently plodding along by his side, fixing every maneuver in his mind: how many times the boy stops, and where; how many times he plays, how much he collects, what he spends and what he eats, for dinner and supper. Grateful for the company and sympathy of this gentle man, Giacomo enumerates the details of his misery.

Charles Loring Brace, patron of the Newsboys' Lodging House, at that time was engaged in agitating for child labor reforms in factories.* So that, when appealed to by Alger for coöperation, he was obliged to turn him away, with, however, the suggestion that he consult Charles E. Whitehead, energetic counsel for the Children's Aid Society. Whitehead made promises of

* The results of his surveys—*Little Laborers of New York City*—were published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* for August, 1873.

support which he did not keep, and received from Alger this letter:

"It is not my business to question your good motives nor have I any desire to do so. But it does occur to me, that regardless of the pressure of other matters calling for attention, you would find time to take up the business I have discussed with you with your associates. You are no more willing to see a child die unnecessarily than I am, yet your lack of diligence in attending to my request fills me with annoyance, if I may say so.

"If the Children's Aid Society is what its name implies, then I cannot be wrong in assuming it has strong obligations to convert all its facilities for eradicating the dastardly evil which I have called to your attention. Your negligible response to my pleadings leaves me with the assumption that duty is not being performed somewhere.

"I wish to put three questions in writing for which I respectfully solicit an early reply.

"First, will the Children's Aid Society take steps to eradicate the padrone system from New York?

"Second, to what extent will it exert its efforts?

"Third, when will its support begin?

"In concluding this correspondence I wish to add one final note of warning: Brutal men are beating little boys to death and the responsibility for this ungodly condition rests with men like you and me."

Importunate though Alger's letter was, the Children's Aid Society was unable to comply with its demands. The Society was performing a notable service

but facilities necessarily were limited. Alger then was at a loss. Maverick, also disappointed, was none the less resolved to go ahead and he urged Alger to undertake a campaign himself. He wrote:

"Conceding the advisability of having the full cooperation of a society well organized and with trained investigators, yet a cause is not lost and should not be forsaken for lack of it. Personally I believe that if the public be made aware of what is transpiring, it will overnight wipe out the padrones. You have enough facts on hand now to talk them out of existence. A few well attended meetings should turn the trick. Why don't you go after them? You will have humanity in your debt if you but try."

Naturally the idea of having humanity in his debt appealed to Alger. Still, he had trepidations about his ability to accomplish any noteworthy reform. Even after he had plunged into the mêlée he was doubtful of his ground. "This is too big an undertaking for one man," he said on more than one occasion. And more than once he would gladly have resigned his rôle had not the forces he set in motion swept him along in the vanguard, its occasionally protesting but universally acknowledged leader.

He was indefatigable in collating data and came to know intimately some twenty boys in the service of padrones. Obviously, an examination of a padrone establishment was essential. Salvatore Gioletti was first to be favored with Alger's attention. As soon as he sensed the purpose of the visit he got the writer out,

threatening bodily harm if he ever came again. Alger's second visit, however indiscreet it may seem, was also to Gioletti. He felt he could draw the man into a genial argument and so elicit information. Gioletti was in anything but a mood for genial argument. Better men, he stated, had been seriously hurt for less interference. That, however, did not deter Mr. Alger. The third time he went he took along a policeman and what he saw inside goaded him to a frenzy. He was "revolted by the sight of it, the dirty, filthy sight of it, the foul stomach-turning smell of it, with two or three boys sprawled sick on the floor, half lying in their own vomit."

There is not in existence any written record which can impart the details of the first mass meeting called by Alger and Maverick. Fortunately, however, the event still lives, if hazily, in the memory of Max Seligson, a New York tailor, who has dictated this memorandum:

"I was out of work at the time, as I remember, walking on Second Avenue near the Battery. I saw a notice in a store window about a protest meeting. I don't remember what the sign said but I had nothing to do that night, so I went. Twenty-five or thirty people were there when it started, on a corner on Catherine Street, and there were many more—two or three hundred—before it ended, who stood around when they saw the other crowd. I remember Alger because I heard he was a writer and I paid strict attention. Somebody talked before he did. I don't remember what he said exactly but it was about padrones and the way they mis-

treated boys. There was a fight when a man yelled he was lying. A cop came and that was the end. Then some of the people signed a petition which was handed around, asking for a law for keeping padrones out of the United States."

Maverick furnished the funds for hiring Lamartine Hall, in which the second meeting was held. No details of what happened there are missing, for Alger supplied them all in a memorandum to Mr. Brace, whose support he was still hopeful of enlisting. He wrote of "an enthusastic attendance of 500 men and women from all walks of life". That "practically every one there voluntarily signed a petition to the Governor of the State" he gleefully recorded, and that "offers of money to carry on the fight" were forthcoming from several of those present. "Members of the press were there," he continued, "but I don't look for any courtesies from that source as yet, but it will come—that we can depend on."

Meetings tumbled one after another in quick succession. In parks and rented halls was the war-cry sounded, week after week, until a flush of indignation lay upon the face of the city. Police officials would do nothing, declaring themselves impotent to stop a traffic which no law had yet condemned. When complaints were made to them and proof cited of attacks on Italian fiddler boys, they made a pretense of arresting the offenders; but bribery was rampant and few of the padrones were convicted. "Honor seems foreign to our police officers," Alger complained, his temper ris-

ing. "This is no mysterious plot that must be dug for to be found. One does not have to search for it far and wide. It is unnecessary to employ scouts and detectives. Why, see here, it is open and above board, on the surface, right in front of everybody's eyes. The next time you hear a violin playing, look out of your window and gaze hard at the boy who is playing it. See the paleness of his face. See the rags he calls clothes. Get close and you will find more bones than flesh. And happiness! Try and see a glimmer of it anywhere in him. Talk with him as I have done and learn what he has to look forward to in this life which under ordinary circumstances is not too beautiful."

A speech which Alger memorized and which became much discussed, was written by him and Maverick in collaboration. It was known as the "Christ Speech" and evoked storms of applause wherever delivered. "Our officials are supposed to be Christians," ran the part best known, "but are they Christians who blind their eyes to villainy on the one hand and extreme suffering on the other? What must God in heaven think of those who live in luxury and contentment while helpless children, torn from their homes in a distant land, are suffered to waste away and enter premature graves for want of the commonest necessities of life? Suppose Christ Himself were to take charge of our civic affairs. O, my friends, just think of that. Christ the head of our government! Would He be content to dress in a uniform and walk with His head high and let these cow-

ardly padrones pass unnoticed? Would He not stop and lend a hand to the boys who wept for succor?"

The padroni began to take notice of Horatio Alger. In him and the furore he created they could not fail to discern a menace to their existence. Foolishly they tried to intimidate him by threats of violence. They sent him stupid letters of warning. Not succeeding in calling a halt to his crusade, they posted friends at meetings with instructions to break them up. This simply succeeded in ranging more advocates on Alger's side. Several attacks were made on him personally, and after one serious affront, during which his head was severely pummeled and knives were drawn and he was rescued by the timely arrival of the despised police, he began to carry a pistol in self-defense. Once an effort was made to assault him in a room he occupied on Seventeenth Street. Writing of that to Charles O'Connor, who was spending a vacation in Vermont, he said:

"I heard a knock on the door and rose instantly to open it. I was startled to see the hall in darkness—which had never been without gas before. 'Who is there?' I called out, but got no response. Thinking this strange, I stepped out into the hall and was set upon by, it seemed, a hundred pair of hands. I shouted for help when a blow across my face stunned me, and then another and another—a hail of blows, each administered with such force that I fell into unconsciousness. I can tell you they pained me severely.

"Regaining my senses I deemed it prudent to say nothing, merely resolving to await developments. I was

carried back into my room and for the first time was enabled to get a glimpse of the assailants. One of them I recognized—an Italian with whom I had remonstrated but two or three days before. He was, I surmised, the leader of the ruffians. Altogether there were four of them—ugly, desperate looking ruffians, whose every word, whether in Italian or English, was an oath. Shutting the door they arranged themselves around me while I sat on a chair and asked if I was ready to listen to reason. I considered it prudent to reply in the affirmative, hoping thus to gain time and possibly be favored with the arrival of Maverick who I was expecting at any moment.

"Salvini, as I later learned the name of the leader to be, then informed me that if I would agree to desist from further activity no further harm would befall me. On the other hand, if I continued—he made no definite threat but from the way he paused and the ominous glint in his eye I knew that neither he nor his confederates would stop short of murder. While I contemplated a reply I heard—and they heard at the same time—steps upon the stairs. During the instant's silence that followed I called out with every vestige of strength there was in me. The men were panic-stricken. Pushing me aside as I leaped to my feet, they jumped to the door and disappeared down the stairs, each in greater fear than the other."

Militant? Oh, yes, Horatio Alger was militant then. Nor did the man lack courage. The publicity attendant on his exploits nerved him for any contingency.

What he lacked in originality of expression he more than made up for by his belligerent tactics. This issue he took to his heart. Indeed, the fact that the issue was ultimately successful remained to comfort him until his dying day. One triumph at least he carried to the grave. And for him it should be said that, though he had a mediocre mind, he had a heart which felt deeply for the weak and the halt and the blind.

Elated at the approval which was being accorded to his endeavors locally, Alger hoped to extend them to other cities. As has been mentioned already, the padrone system was not confined to New York. But, unwilling to leave New York until victory was complete, Alger planned the organization of others to take up the work for him in distant places. But where could he turn first? Who was there, outside of New York, whose sympathy he might enlist? Of course there was his father up in Massachusetts—not a powerful figure but at any rate a venerable one, with a large acquaintanceship, a faithful following, active in the Unitarian church, a member of several historical societies. Could he help? *Would* he help? Horatio decided to try. There could be no loss—possibly much gain. He penned a summary of the conditions as he found them and submitted a digest of the reforms he was hoping to accomplish. "If you can manage it, it will have a salutary effect on our efforts. A petition signed by all the Unitarian ministers you can get together, and by all members in their respective parishes, will be a big step toward getting other denominations to follow suit.

Once the religious element voices its disapprobation nothing can stand in the way. The press will be forced to take up the cudgels and slay this awful terror wherever it exists in the country."

But no, his father would not help. It seemed to him a situation within the province of the police to solve and had nothing to do with religion. Although, if what his son had said was true, some remedy should be found, he did not see why ministers should get themselves embroiled in a purely lay affair. Besides, what chance was there of Catholics or Methodists endorsing any proposition the Unitarians advanced? And was it not more than probable the Unitarians would make of themselves a laughing stock for raising a fuss over immigrant boys who ought never to have been admitted to this great country, anyway!

No, from his father there could be no assistance, for it was that old man and others of his ilk of whom Theodore Parker, once a minister in the neighboring town of Roxbury, had said, "I must confess that I am disappointed in the ministers—the Unitarian ministers. I once thought them noble; that they would be true to an ideal principle of right. I find that no body of men was ever more completely sold to the sense of expediency."

Phil, the Fiddler, based on evidence accumulated during his crusade, established Alger once and for all as a force to be reckoned with. A sorry piece of literature at best, it was explosive propaganda none the less and sounded the death knell for the padrone system so

far as it applied to boys. Almost a thousand messages poured in on the author after its publication. It was, in a minor way, another *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* And it was ever the book that Alger cherished most.

Up to this point Alger's hysterical campaigning was productive of much public sympathy; in a practical way not a single reform had been effected. The padrones operated as they did before, with magistrates repeatedly declaring themselves without jurisdiction to interfere. It is not inconceivable that all Horatio's haranguing would have gone for naught had not something occurred at an auspicious moment to shock the populace as it had not been shocked in many a long year. "He who has seen," said Victor Hugo, "the misery of man only has seen nothing; he must see the misery of woman. He who has seen the misery of woman only has seen nothing; he must see the misery of childhood." The Mary Ellen case, now famous in the annals of rescue work, provided blasé New York with a ghastly opportunity to witness some of the misery of childhood.

Ten days before he died, Elbridge T. Gerry, in his last public appearance, referred to Mary Ellen. On that occasion the eminent humanitarian presented a résumé of the case. "Years ago," he said, "a charitable woman in this city, visiting among the tenement houses in it, found in the last stages of consumption a woman on the sixth story of a very dilapidated house. She called to utter those words of mercy which to the dying, next to their spiritual consolation, is the greatest com-

fort they can have—the words of Christian loving charity, endeavoring so far as she could to smooth the pathway to the grave, and asked whether she could do anything to relieve her. The woman replied, 'My time is short, but there is a wretched little girl by the name of Mary Ellen who is beaten day after day and night after night by her stepmother in the room adjoining.' The woman went and tried the door and it was locked. Then she went to the police, and laid the case before them. The police said, 'We cannot break that door without a warrant. Go to a magistrate, make your affidavit, and get a warrant, and we will enforce it.' She then went to one in my own profession and on consulting the lawyer he said, 'Madam, this is a very dangerous thing for you to undertake. You are not the guardian of that child; you know nothing about it; the parent has a right to correct a child. You will involve yourself in legal complications and possibly in arrest if you undertake to interfere in a case which doesn't concern you.'

"Then," proceeded Mr. Gerry, "she next went to her spiritual adviser and he said to her: 'Madam, it is a very dangerous thing to interfere between parent and child. I advise you to have nothing to do with the case. If the child is suffering and is placed in your hands we will take care of it. If it desires proper education merely, we will furnish it; but it is a dangerous thing to interfere between parent and child.' "

Lastly the young woman called on a man whose name

was Henry Bergh and who was president of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

"I have got to see you," she said, "because you endeavor to protect and do successfully protect the dumb creation."

"That is true, madam," replied Henry Bergh, "and I have quite enough to do to attend to the dumb creation."

"But," the young woman persisted, "the ground on which you protect the dumb creation is its absolute helplessness, and is there anything more helpless than a helpless child?" While the man she had come to see pondered her analogy, she continued. "At all events, a child in that sense is certainly an animal—just an animal—only—only that it has a soul."

Henry Bergh, thenceforth, had the case in his own capable hands. The facts were verified, a warrant sworn, and the tenement hovel entered. They found inside a little girl, trembling with fear, her skinny body beaten to a pulp, bruised and torn and scarred, and her head gashed open in front by a blow from a pair of scissors . . . New York, as was said before, emitted a gasp. And it shuddered at the thought of what was happening to children in the service of padrones, of whom Horatio Alger had been saying so much. And it cursed to think there was no agency anywhere for their protection. The people's voice was heard, for the legislature of the State of New York was not slow, in 1874, to pass "the first statute in the world for the prevention of cruelty to children."

In this manner was Mr. Gerry's Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children brought into being. That it utilized the police power conferred on it by the legislature for an assault on the padrone system, must be attributed almost wholly to what Horatio Alger bravely brought to light. Is it any wonder that he longed for Patience Stires to share his triumph?



Cover for an Alger opus:

The Store Boy
or, The Fortunes of Ben Barclay

IX
GREELEY SPEAKS HIS PIECE

Often the Postmaster General, elated over the efficiency with which his department is functioning, dictates a complimentary bulletin "to the mail carriers of the United States." A young citizen of Detroit, getting hold of a copy quite by accident, was puzzled. "You know," he said, "I suppose a mail carrier is a man who delivers the mail to my house every morning, but the truth of the matter is I'm not sure. I live in an apartment house," he added, "and letters for me are brought to my door by the hall attendant. What is the fellow like who delivers them to the attendant? Does he wear a uniform? Is he like our milkman—whom I have never seen?"

It is a true but not especially lamentable fact that mail carriers, so far as the public is concerned, are fast achieving a bleak obscurity. In rural communities they are as much as ever in evidence; but in cities they are becoming more and more a part of that vast "service" which day after day serves unseen. Not always was this the case. The time was when they carried gossip as well as mail, and blew whistles, and paused a moment

to sip a tumbler of wine with the owner of the house, and joyfully accepted a gift of a turkey at Thanksgiving and a piece of gold on Merry Christmas. Some postmen, naturally, had more lucrative routes than others. The postman who handed mail to Horatio Alger, for example, was smiled upon by the gods. For Alger was a liberal man, most generous with his bounties.

Which is as it should have been. Mr. Alger received so much mail he didn't know what to do with it. So, as some people will who have things they don't know what to do with, he kept a good part of it. Fortunately, too, for this biographer. It has helped immensely in finding out what some folks thought of him at the time. A boy in Milwaukee, to cite an instance, thought he put too much arithmetic in his stories. He said it was clear that if a person had a dollar and spent thirty cents for a ticket to Tony Pastor's theatre, he would have seventy cents left; and that Alger needn't go to the trouble of figuring it out. On the other hand, there was a man in the same city who wrote that Alger's stories were "as good as Diamond Dick, even without a lot of murders".

Stage and motion picture celebrities of today may point boastfully to the bags of correspondence which admirers direct to their attention; yet their pride must be diluted a trifle when they think of the paid publicity agents at whose instigation much of the mail is mailed. Alger had no agents. The hundreds of letters he received in the course of a year were genuine; were written without advertised promise of a photograph in re-

turn. Boys laid bare their woes to him. "My father is like Squire Tarbox," more than one youngster confided. "He is mean and stingy and gives me no money to spend. He is——," and then would be enumerated a list of complaints and fancied wrongs, usually ending with the question "Should I run away?"

Other boys wrote for "more about Sam Crawford"; and wanted to know if Tom Tracy were still living and "what is his address, please"; and said *The Tin Box* was great; and asked peculiar questions, such as "Will I be able to get work in New York, because I am deaf in both ears and can't get no work here." Adults made inquiries about business careers for their children, one perplexed parent saying,

"Charles is an only son. He is aged sixteen, proficient in geography, and has made up his mind to be a sailor. Should I let him be a sailor? Is there any future to being a sailor? Will you let me know how much money sailors earn? Are all sailors bad? Would there be too great a temptation to evil for a boy of sixteen to withstand? Thank you in advance, Mr. Alger, for your kind attention."

Calls for autographs were astonishingly frequent and invariably complied with. Sometimes people asked for poems; serenely he supplied them. And in this connection he took great pains to indite couplets which would fit the circumstances of his petitioner. To a girl who had broken her doll he wrote:

> Think of your Dolly as she was at her best
> And she will be happier in Heavenly rest.

To a widow with several children:

The future will be filled with light,
Children dear will make it bright.

To a boy, for his birthday:

To man's estate you'll soon succeed;
As a man, strive to lead.

To a young man supporting his father:

His soul draws nearest unto God above,
Who to his brother ministers in love.

No task so much appealed to Alger as answering his mail. He prided himself on his prompt responses. He never delayed replies. Letters came in and, with few exceptions, were answered on the same day. He wanted no one to consider him snobbish. When pilgrimages out of town interfered with this custom he did not, on his return, neglect to explain the cause of his delinquency. Some idea of his scrupulous desire not to offend a correspondent may be adduced from this, a letter written by him on December 18, 1886:

"I have received within a few days a very kind letter from you *dated July 18, 1886*. It was forwarded by Lee & Shepard * of Boston, and appears to have been mailed from your town only recently. I mention this, to account for my delay in answering, if it was really written July 18.

"I am gratified by your appreciation," the letter con-

* Alger's publishers at that time.

tinues, "and that of your boys, to whom I send a Christmas greeting. I work the more cheerfully for the kind messages which I receive from different parts of the country.

"I have no photographs on hand, but send a paper containing my illustrated biography, so that you can get an idea of my outward appearance."

However pronounced his shortcomings in his social contacts, Horatio Alger had the happy faculty of keeping friends by mail. A limited number of them there were whom he looked upon as next-door neighbors—though he had never met them. With one Wallace Borden he communicated at regular intervals for more than eleven years, failing ever to see him. Borden lived in Vermont. In his first letter to Horatio he thanked him for an entertaining account of a newsboy's existence in New York, remarked that once he had been a newsboy himself and now was well to do—retired, in fact, though still in the prime of life. He hoped Mr. Alger would be so kind as to write him.

Each man during that eleven year period spoke in detail of his manner of existence, described persons met and places visited. Each spoke of the things which pleased and displeased him; they consulted each other on remedies for headaches, rheumatism and colds in the chest. Through the correspondence Horatio came to know Mr. Borden's wife—that is, he knew about her, what an extraordinary woman she was, and how capable and kind. After a while his letters conveyed good wishes to her. When news of her death arrived he com-

posed a letter to his friend, which, though sentimental, surpasses anything he ever put in print.

"Dear Borden," he wrote. "All dreams end, all flowers lose their color, all stars twinkle but a while. The shades of night are drawn on the glories of the serenest day.

"I am sorry. I have lost a friend. I, who never knew her, never spoke a word to her—feel her absence. Her loveliness and passive charm I appreciated through you. Through her eyes I was aware of her nearness. I heard her voice and saw her smile.

"Try not to grieve. I think she would be happier to know you will not grieve. Keep in mind the happy years you spent with her and be not angry with God for calling her. Rather thank Him for the day He gave her to you. Cherish the memory of that day as even I cherish the memory of a long ago day.

"In the face of your loss do not despond. Try to smile a little, though sadly. Bear bravely and cheerfully what more life has in store. Some day you will meet again."

High up in a building on Madison Avenue in New York is the office of a man who knew Horatio Alger. His name is Edward Stratemeyer, which may be recalled by those who devoured his books about Dave Porter, and by others who followed his stories in Munsey's *Golden Argosy* and Street & Smith's weekly *Good News*. Quicker identification may be made, however, by reference to his *nom de plume* of Captain Ralph Bone-

hill, and to another—Arthur M. Winfield—under which he has turned out a thirty volume series of *The Rover Boys.* The day was when Mr. Stratemeyer consulted Horatio Alger and asked, "What is it gives you such a hold on boys? What is the secret of your story telling?"

A great many people asked the same questions of Horatio, particularly by mail. Renown was his to an extent so much greater than other authors of his day that he was the authority to which young literary aspirants flocked for guidance. "Do you think 'The Tale of a Ruined Career', of which I am enclosing a copy, shows talent?" "I have never written stories before but I feel there is something in me—some power——." "Would you be kind enough to advise me whether the end of a story is more important than the beginning?" Hardly a week went by without its quota of queries, a circumstance which should afford consolation to editors of contemporary periodicals who think they alone have a monopoly on literary-career correspondents.

Some letters shocked Horatio, chiefly those which condemned him. One Howard Giles earned his undying enmity by declaring such books as his were a sound argument for government censorship. "Your stuff is abominable and has a derogatory influence on the young mind," fumed Mr. Giles. To outpourings of this nature, and in his declining years they were frequent, Horatio paid no heed. They stung him to the quick, inflicting deep, unhealing wounds which he assuaged as best he could without resorting to rebuttal.

It is in his favor that he knew he had no adequate retort and so made no retort at all. But Mr. Giles resented the author's silence. As the supervisor of a boys' boarding school he deemed himself entitled to a respectful reply; and when none was forthcoming he considered it a duty to call in person on the man who was "doing more than any other to prevent young people from developing a taste for the inspired literature of the masters." Alger was apprised of the impending visit but unequivocally refused to play host. "I paid no attention to the ringing of the bell," relates his diary, "and he went away in short order." It would comfort Alger no whit to know that Howard Giles' son did much, early in the present century, to have his books removed from several libraries.

Tribute has been paid before to the astuteness of A. K. Loring, Alger's first publisher. Here was a man who knew how to make money. For years he had been accumulating a fortune from the sale of Horatio's books. The day came when he saw a means for increasing his already substantial revenue. Investigation had shown him that the popularity of Alger's stories was growing in the West and waning in the East. This he attributed to the locale of the stories, averring that incidents of metropolitan life were obviously more appealing to people who lived on farms and in small towns than to city people who could see such incidents for themselves. Therefore he suggested that Alger reverse his procedure—write stories about the West for boys in the East; and so gain a still larger audience. Alger's

mail bore out Loring's conjecture; letters from the other side of the Mississippi were more abundant.

While contemplating a journey to the Pacific coast, Horatio unearthed—it is not known where—a curious piece of information. Jocularly Loring had written to him, "Go West, young man, go West, and heed Horace Greeley's advice." With the hope of discerning some pertinent data in the unquoted portion of what Mr. Greeley advised, Alger located the *Tribune* editorial wherein Greeley spoke his famous piece. He found that what Greeley really said was, "Go West, young man, and grow up with the country." And when he found, a little later, that it was John L. B. Soule who had said, "Go West, young man, Go West"—in the Terre Haute *Express,* in 1851—he hailed his discovery as something likely to right a grievous wrong.

After the death of Wing the days stood still for Alger. He was nervous and wan and absorbed in his sorrow. He could not remain settled in any one place; in the course of a single year he had seven changes of address. On and off, for many years, he accepted appointments as private tutor. Only rarely did something occur to penetrate the gloom and the dullness. Once, needlessly exposing himself at night on Water Street —then a rendezvous for thugs—he was held up and robbed. He accepted the incident without complaint, failing to report his loss except in a memorandum reminding himself to purchase another watch. And once he was minded to begin an attack on saloons. To a

friend, an artist with the New York *Herald,* he gave an idea for an anti-saloon cartoon. The artist, de Grimm, availed himself of the idea without giving Alger credit for its conception. Which made Alger furious with de Grimm and the liquor problem too, and thereafter he ignored both.

Mentally Horatio grew susceptible to Loring's suggestion. He wanted to be travelling. Had his health been good he would have entrained at once, but he was complaining of colds and feared he had asthma. At length he decided to go away at any cost, first drawing up a will—later revised—bequeathing all his belongings to the Newsboys' Lodging House. A few friends gathered to see him off and presented him with a diamond scarf pin.

A man slightly younger than himself sat beside him on the train. They became acquainted, and talked for hours, and soon learned of each other's history and family. Samuel Albee was touched by Horatio's account of Wing. More touched than Alger knew, for but a year before he had buried his own only child, a boy of twelve. Now he was on his way home, to Cincinnati, where with his wife he lived in fine but unpretentious style. His quiet, sincere manner appealed to Alger, who agreed to stop in Cincinnati for a few days to visit with him.

It was a beautiful household to which Horatio was made welcome. Later he was to remark that he had never known two people so completely attuned to each

other as Samuel and Paulina Albee. Fourteen years married and still deeply in love, each with an understanding and sympathetic toleration of the other's faults, and more than ever bound together as a result of their bereavement, this couple made Alger comfortable and bade him stay as long as he wished. Having in mind a halt of only two or three days, the author quickly changed his plans. Heretofore music had meant nothing to him, but Paulina soothed and charmed him with her skill at the piano. That was an unvarying ritual in the Albee home—before bed-time every evening Paulina composed herself to play. And regularly each evening, as the woman rose from her stool, Samuel would be standing ready to hug her and for an instant affectionately clasp her hands in his.

A household quiet with the beauty of love and sorrow joined. The melodies Paulina strummed in the lamplight were a part of it, seeming to hover caressingly in the air, bringing peace and contentment to its occupants. And into it Alger fitted well, breathing ecstatically of its calm, falling easily in with the simple routine of his hosts. He gave no sign of the hurts he felt in the face of this devotion, nor let it be known that when Samuel stretched out his arms and reached for his wife, he was wont, for Patience and Wing, longingly to stretch out his own.

They were talking one day, Horatio and Samuel, when the author remarked on the blessedness of some married lives, and it was that which prompted Samuel to say, "Some time, of course, you'll have a home of

your own." And then, as Alger merely looked at him without speaking, he added, with a hint of interrogation in his voice, "I mean—you'll marry."

Horatio shook his head. "No, I won't marry," he replied.

If Samuel smiled in a way to show that he was skeptical and knew better, it cannot be construed as a presumption. For Alger, by all accepted standards, was most eligible for matrimony. That he was considerably above the average age for marrying did not much detract from the qualifications he undoubtedly possessed: a congenial temperament and a sufficient income. When his father, rather testily, exclaimed, "It is a disgrace for a man of your age to be running around unmarried," Horatio replied, "I suppose it would be a shame for me to knock you down—you just don't know any better." When his sister, more tenderly, made a similar observation, he returned: "I know I am not what is called a strong character. I can be influenced against my will. I can be made to do things for which I am later sorry. But on the question of marriage, please save your suggestions. I don't want them, I won't listen to them, I have no use for them."

The society of women, however, he did enjoy, in a limited way; but the prospect of marriage he did not covet—not after Patience. Their adulation he was pleased with, but remarkably scarce were the women for whom he experienced any degree of love. His second and last great amour was still in the future, and even when it did come marriage was not a consideration,

for the woman of it already had a husband. In between were three or four—mere passing fancies, like Doris Stuart, a girl of twenty-two, who set her cap, at Albee's instigation, and launched a brief and ingenious but futile campaign.

Doris spoke not of love but of life: the thrilling voyage, started in a beribboned cradle, ended in a flower-covered box. She harped on its storms and its shipwrecks and was ravished at thought of a man who was strong enough to overcome them all and ultimately land triumphant on a distant shore. Doris did make some slight impression, but after a week of uninterrupted gushing she withdrew, exhausted.

"Well," asked Samuel Albee, "how did she strike you?"

Horatio looked out of the window. "She's fat," he said.

Though Samuel failed to interest Alger in a woman, at least one of his guests was somewhat more of an attraction. This was Arthur Bishop, a young man with a decided penchant for doing nothing. "He just sits around," was Alger's comment, "and smiles." It was the smiles, however, that caught his eye; in them was something that said, "You see, I am a sufferer, too." The day before he resumed his journey west Alger called his host aside. "Arthur puzzles me," he whispered. "Tell me, is he as lazy as he seems—or is there something else?" That was all, Albee assured him; out-and-out laziness, and—consumption.

One poem that Alger wrote achieved a wide celebrity.

For twenty years it was one of the most popular pieces at "exercises" held by schools and societies. Everywhere it was acclaimed and without it no oratorical contest was complete. In *The Writer* for December, 1895, Alger discussed this poem.

"The ballad of *John Maynard,*" he wrote, "has been included in so many 'speakers' and collections that I may perhaps be justified in assuming that it is known to the majority of my readers. Many inquiries have been addressed to me and to the editors of periodicals as to whether it is founded on fact or simply invented, like Robert Browning's famous lyric, *How the Good News Was Brought from Ghent to Aix.*

"To recall the ballad to some who may not be entirely familiar with it, I will quote the first stanza.

'Twas on Lake Erie's broad expanse,
One bright midsummer day,
The gallant steamer Ocean Queen
Swept proudly on her way.
Bright faces clustered on the deck,
Or, leaning o'er the side,
Watched carelessly the feathery foam
That flecked the rippling tide.

"Suddenly," Mr. Alger proceeds, "a sailor discovers that the steamer is on fire. He carries the terrible news to the captain. A sailor named John Maynard is at the wheel. As the flames make rapid progress it is seen that the only hope of safety is to steer the ship to land. Under the captain's order John Maynard undertakes

the dangerous task. They are within half a mile of shore.

> But half a mile! Yet stay, the flames
> No longer slowly creep,
> But gather round the helmsman bold
> With fierce impetuous sweep.

"Implored by the captain to remain at the wheel for five minutes more, John Maynard does so. In brief, he succeeds in his task, but as the steamer touches shore he sinks in death beside it. He falls a victim to the flames, but the passengers are saved. It will be seen," the article concludes, modestly, "that the story is a striking one."

It was this poem which Alger was called upon to recite before the Friday Afternoon Club—composed of women with literary aspirations—upon his arrival in San Francisco. Marion Lambert, its president, was so impressed by the author that she insisted he come to live at her home during his stay in the city. Joining in the invitation was her sister Grace, who declared the verse to be "the most exciting and stimulating" she ever heard. The hospitality of the two women, who were over forty, made up somewhat for their lack of good looks. Grace had been a nurse, Marion a dabbler in fairy tales for children, which helps in part to interpret the man's attraction. As for the other part, they were frequently alone—and they were only human. Who shall blame them if they were not averse to holding hands with a man, or being stroked, or squeezed, or

tucked in bed? Under the circumstances it is not surprising that Alger forgot about his mission. He could not have been more zealously attended had he been to the purple born, nor more thoroughly fêted. Yet despite the infatuation of the sisters they could not remain blind to their guest's shortcomings as an entertainer. Wherefor they continued to laud him to their friends but less frequently invited their friends to meet him. When Mr. Lambert, the father, returned from a sojourn in Texas, Alger's chances of escape grew dim indeed. The old man regaled him with anecdotes about his life as a miner, and though they bored him at the time, Alger depended on them almost entirely when he came to write his books about the West, for they represented most of the information he had.

He might have stayed with the Lamberts indefinitely had not Bret Harte been invited in his turn to address the Friday Afternoon Club. Immediately Harte usurped Horatio's rôle and became the Lambert sisters' hero. Endlessly they spoke of him, praising his books, to Horatio's great discomfiture. It told on his nerves and worried him. It caused him to ponder again his own deficiencies. The idea that he was a failure grew on him, and he moved aimlessly around, trying to down the spectre. Of what he did then only fragmentary knowledge is at hand—scraps of letters, bits from the diary, memories of old acquaintances for the most part reluctant to utter a disparaging word. He moved himself to a settlement in the shadow of the Rockies,



A Drunkard's Dream.

The cartoon Alger conceived

there fitting up a hut in which he mourned. A kindly neighbor taught him how to ride.

He trudged along a mountain path and perched himself up high, where, in the half-light, and as the trees made love, he could see dimly the plain unroll below.

"Am I, dear God, a failure?"

That was his question, a thousand times repeated. He tells himself that he is not a failure who can find thoughts and words for a story that men will read today and their children tomorrow, and children to come in tomorrows to come, down through time forever. But words for him are scarce and thoughts are scarcer. The man's despairing cry darts down to the plain, sweeps across to a neighboring mountain wall, and rises again in even more despairing echo:

"I want to write!"

X
ESCAPADE

A policeman making his rounds in the town of Peekskill early one morning stumbled on the bullet-ridden body of a man. Jeremiah Hardy had been brutally shot to death and the money on his person carried off. When his widow was arrested and detained on charge of murder, she collapsed. In agonizing wails she proclaimed her innocence and practically won her freedom by the power of her lungs. During one eerie outburst she muttered an hysterical something about a strange individual she had seen prowling in the neighborhood. Promptly the police dashed off in pursuit and when in a few hours they returned with a captive, it was seen he was scrawny, sick and meek, that his clothes were old and tattered, and his speech a trifle incoherent.

"Is this the man, Mrs. Hardy?"

"Yes," groaned Mrs. Hardy, "that's the man."

So Horatio Alger was escorted to the jail. The officials took for granted that the murderer was in their hands and half the town turned out to stare in admiration at the court. The zeal of Mrs. Hardy in pointing out Horatio made the case seem clear and simple. That

she merely had identified him as having been in the vicinity was of minor significance. A man had been murdered and another man would have to pay. Justice was bound to prevail: they had another man.

Following the first few hours of shock Edith Hardy scribbled a hectic message to her sister, describing her sad and awkward plight. Una Garth, the sister, lived in Europe. Upon receipt of the letter she set sail for New York, together with her husband Russel and her favorite brother, Eugene.

On the first evening of his imprisonment Alger was ordered to vacate his cell in favor of a man who voluntarily had surrendered and made full confession of the crime. Prior to being released, however, he had been required to render an account of his still unexplained presence in Peekskill. The police learned that he had but recently arrived from California. There, he told them, he had been taken ill. For a time, he said, his memory had forsaken him. Innumerable the questions his captors asked and copious the notes they jotted down. All that he said they made a record of, and nodded in acquiescence. But not for a moment did they believe him.

"Horatio Alger!" they mocked in private. "Imagine —*him* Horatio Alger!" Then ascertaining that he was boarding most respectably with one of the town's old families, they bothered him no more. Quite apparently he was an idler, but one, fortunately for the municipality, with sufficient means to pay his way. In their eagerness to release him and avoid difficulties which

might have arisen because of false arrest, the police hesitated to make more than superficial inquiries concerning him. "He's a little bit off," they decided, and at that they let it go. Had they gone to his room and burrowed among his papers. . . .

In due time Edith Hardy regained her composure and in a calm manner reviewed in her mind the circumstances of the murder. She concluded that her hysteria had wreaked a grave injustice on a thoroughly innocent man and for this she was sorry. Being eminently fair and kind, she dispatched a note to Mr. Alger. "I am afraid," she wrote, "that I was unwittingly the cause of the unpleasant experience which befell you recently. I do not know what amends I can make but I do wish to express my regret and ask your indulgence."

Horatio responded with a message in which he said he understood the circumstances perfectly and had been in no way inconvenienced. He regretted more than he could say the unhappiness which must now be her lot, and would she be so kind as to call on him if he could be of service. Mrs. Hardy, it so happened, was sufficiently kind: did Mr. Alger know some one in New York who could be entrusted with a mission to the insurance company? Here Horatio decided upon direct action and in lieu of a communication called in person on the widow. He turned up in newly purchased clothes, and most genteelly scrubbed; the impression created in the first brief visit was highly in his favor. He suggested the name of Charles O'Connor and

agreed to enlist his aid on the woman's behalf. That settled, he took his leave.

Out for a stroll a few days later, he met Mrs. Hardy and accompanied her home for tea. It was very charming, he thought, to be able to sit down again and chat with a person who seemed not unsympathetic toward one's lonesomeness. Several times more during the course of the week he put in an appearance. His dejection vanished rapidly and he began to look more like his normal self. Besides, Mrs. Hardy promised him a delightful surprise. She had had word, she informed him, of the imminent approach of her family. She knew he would be ravished with her sister. Declaring Mrs. Garth to be at once beautiful and intelligent, a woman in many ways far in the van of her sex, she whetted Alger's appetite. The prospect was not at all discouraging and Horatio waited hopefully.

Attired in a gown of white silk, Mrs. Garth smiled a pleasant welcome to Horatio. It was the second evening after her arrival. That first smile, playing below a pair of twinkling eyes, caught the caller's fancy. The tender glow which lay behind the twinkle of the eyes drew him, held him, turned him topsy-turvy. He guessed the woman's age as forty. The slimness of youth was hers no longer, but even more beholden to the sight was the reasonable fullness of figure which had succeeded. Her carriage was splendid, a mixture of dignity and gentility. Simply to observe, a person of reticence; intimately to know, a creature of warmth and humor and compassion.

Her brother Eugene Williston was garrulous but interesting, yet of the many anecdotes he related only a few were heard by Alger. The attention of the latter was focussed on the woman. It seemed to him the expression of interest which he thus manifested was not unfavorably received, for now and then Mrs. Garth would return his gaze in equally friendly fashion. "I should like nothing better than to know you," was Alger's thought, and hers, "You, too, seem interesting to me."

Only Russel Garth appeared without enthusiasm for Horatio. He experienced an immediate surge of dislike and mistrust, a premonition of unnecessary and unwarranted competition for the affection of his wife. He tried to ignore Alger but only partially succeeded. Now and then, without success, he interposed a remark which was intended to chide and hurt a little. Somehow he sensed the formation of a triangle. Though not alarmed, he was at least disturbed; for love was a game at which he was not adept. His forte was business, his life was business; all that he enjoyed issued from a knowledge of accomplishment in commercial negotiation. He was an American like his wife; his position as foreign representative of a Chicago company kept him for years on end in Europe. In Paris, where their home was, he had no time to observe her or her behavior. It had never occurred to him that observation was called for. He would have been the first to laugh had some one told him he had lost her affection

because of inattention. He would have been first to deny that work meant more to him than Una.

Horatio Alger passed a sleepless night. For the second time in his life he knew the spark of spontaneous love. Here was a woman who, consequences notwithstanding, he must come to know much better. Physically and mentally she appealed to him. To further the acquaintance seemed not out of the question but there was one disquieting element: What would husband Russel say?

Rising early, he went into the garden and gathered flowers and toward eleven o'clock carried them to the home of Mrs. Hardy. The family was already out but returned to find him mooning on the porch, the bouquet in his arms. No special urging was required to make him stay. Accepting the invitation to luncheon, he remained through the afternoon and evening. Russel Garth frowned, Eugene grinned, Mrs. Hardy was amused. "That man strikes me as being a damned fool," confided Russel to his wife. "He seems rather pleasant," defended Una, and gave point to her reply by going alone with Horatio for a walk.

It was the beginning of a long and peculiar courtship, with two men, equally unfamiliar with the art of love, striving for the heart of a woman who knew all. In Europe Russel would have met the situation, but here for some reason he was lost. For so many years the continent had been his home that he was inured to its customs and requirements. Coming back to a land where conventions were less rampant, and finding his

right to his wife challenged by a man whose regard for etiquette was slight and whose tact was negligible, he was nettled and perplexed. Alger, starved as he was for love, began to pay less and less heed to the person of Mr. Garth. His indiscretions were superb. In front of Russel he asked Una to ride with him. In short order he called her by her first name. He began to buy trinkets for her, and books. In conversation he had words only for her, turning his back on Russel as though he were not friend or foe but, for all practical purposes, absent.

Russel's decisive move, intended to be a shrewd one, failed of its purpose. He explained that business was calling him to New York and asked both Una and Eugene hastily to prepare for the journey. Two days after they left, Alger followed, once more accommodating himself in the city, not far from Una's quarters. Again he would have flaunted his love in full sight of Russel, but the woman, appreciating the better part of valor, insisted that their meetings remain secret. So they met regularly each day and enjoyed each other's company, supremely happy and content. Alger took her once to the newsboys' home, there introducing her to O'Connor. "I like her," O'Connor said, "but——" That "but" passed unnoticed then, but in days to come . . .

Visits to Horatio's own room seemed next in order. It was a place where they could rest in rapturous contemplation of each other without thought or fear of interruption. Under her influence Horatio came again

upon ambitions which illness had caused him temporarily to discard, and these he expounded to Una, who listened, enthralled and acceding. Herself an ardent reader, an admirer of good writing, she took for granted that a man so well and favorably known as an author of juveniles could also, should he wish, earn a place in higher literature. She hoped with him, and encouraged his projects, and inspired him. And because she had no children of her own, and could have none, she fondled him.

Both impulsive, they found in each other a desired solace. Once Una suggested, for her husband's sake, that their comradeship should cease; but Alger's forlorn look and sorrow-stricken eyes made her regret and repeal the suggestion and they continued as before. For a month their clandestine escapades went on, yet in that time they strictly observed the code and confined themselves to no more than sentimental embraces. Which lasted until Russel Garth was ordered to Chicago and Horatio bought a farm.

The farm was O'Connor's idea. He saw in it a means of getting Horatio away from the city and Una; but his ruse too was doomed to failure. Coming across a stretch of land in Arlington, and remembering Alger's once expressed desire to own a country home, he urged his friend to buy it. Horatio visited the property and was struck with the beauty of the view. "I have bought a farm," he said to Una, and in a whisper, added, "Will you come and stay with me?" She assented readily and it then was Alger's task to supply the house with furni-

ture. He drew up a list of necessary things and presented it to Una for approval. The woman noted chairs and tables and rugs and lamps—and particularly two beds. Without looking up she donned her most coquettish manner and softly murmured, "Goodness me, Horatio, why *two* beds?"

With all his heart and soul he loved her. A little less ardent than he, Una Garth yet gave herself as much as it was in her power to give. Now and then her sense of humor intervened, causing her to smile at this eccentric bedfellow who spoke with the passion of a schoolboy. As she grew to know him better her opinion of his ability gradually diminished, though she was not loath to nourish his desires. A keen insight enabled her to discern his weaknesses—his lack of substantial imagination, of thoroughness, of stamina to carry on. A collaborator, it was her opinion, might make possible such a masterpiece as he spoke of, but she doubted if ever, alone, he would achieve his goal. At her suggestion of a partnership with some other writer Alger rebelled. Inclined for a moment to resent the thought as an unfavorable indictment of his prowess, he quickly overcame his anger and agreed to take it under advisement. Actually he had no use for the idea. When his book came, it would bear the name of Alger and no other.

From Eugene Williston came a letter advising of Mr. Garth's projected return. He mentioned also his own desire for a hurried departure to Europe, where his shipping business appeared to be encountering reverses. On his advice Una and Alger packed, and it

was none too soon. Russel reached New York but a few hours in their wake, greeting his wife fervently, entirely without suspicion of her actions in his absence. Had he known, not only that Alger was in town, but also that he was preparing to sail along, he might have committed sundry indiscretions on his own account.

But Alger, as it happened, did not go. An unexpected statement from his banker revealed the depleted status of his account. He had been spending money much too freely and now the voyage was out of the question. To go abroad again he first would have to finish several stories. The last meeting was arranged in his room. The woman promised to write and to remember, while he promised to write and remember and follow after. He was more in love than ever. She was not.

To return at once to work he found impossible. Still burning with the sense of Una's nearness, he waited for his nerves to quiet down before essaying another volume. Insurmountable the difficulty of reconciling himself to loneliness. Repeatedly he reproached himself for not having borrowed money for the journey. After weeks of fruitless scribbling he decided to be brave. Pulling himself together, he bolstered his determination by drawing up resolutions. "I'll set myself a schedule," he said, and vowed to rise and work and sleep at specified hours. All of which was futile. Never having been subject to routine, he conceded he could abide by no routine now. When he commenced *Ray Radford's Reward* he wore himself ragged trying to move it along.

Several chapters finished, he paused to read them with a feeling of disgust. Even his juvenile literature henceforth must be perfect. Henceforth naught should leave his hands or appear above his signature unless its structure were well-nigh perfect and its polish unimpeachable. *Ray Radford* had its shortcomings, obvious deficiencies which caused him to crumple up and cast off what he had written.

O'Connor ventured a call and proffered some advice. He advocated an extended rest—another visit to the farm, where he could idly contemplate the passing hours without a thought of work. And he took occasion to say that Mrs. Garth had done Horatio no iota of good, that her presence had surely affected him adversely. Preserving a fierce silence, Alger let him finish. And then his pent-up wrath exploded. Smarting under the rebuke, morose over this their first and only quarrel, O'Connor left Horatio to his tantrum. At the Newsboys' Lodging House on the ensuing morning he found a note which during the night had been delivered for his attention. "Forgive me," it read, "I am not well."

A letter a day Horatio wrote to Una; long, rambling, passionate discourses, some of which, for very shame, he did not mail. But not a word from her. Not a sign, not a sound. "Can you have forgotten, Una darling? Has all that passed meant nothing?" All that he then was or ever hoped to be he would have traded for a mere "Yes, Horatio, I still love you." All that he asked for was a gesture. All he prayed for was a smile. Anything, anything then—only not oblivion in her eyes.

Write to him, Una, and ease his writhing soul! Write to him, Una, and let him sleep with your letter pressed close to his breast! Write, and tell him you have not forgotten. Spare him his misery. Temper the turbulence of his being. Be kind, Una, for he is but a child. While you hesitate he may do rash things. Already he is desperate for the want of news. Now, at the very moment when the National Welfare League is passing a resolution in praise of him, he is tearing his hair and cursing his unhappy fate. While you tarry with your pen he is groaning in despair. So write to him, Una, write!

And this is what she writes:

"For heaven's sake, my dear, be more discreet. Suppose that Russel should come across your letters! What would I do? I have not forgotten and I will not forget —but pray store up your feelings until you can see me. It will be better not to correspond at all and I must ask you to consider this quite final. Only when you are ready to come, then send me word, but let even that be casual."

Una is right and he has proved himself a fool. What jeopardy he might have placed her in! Idiot, scoundrel —he heaps abuse upon himself. The thing to do is work—work and earn his way across. To hell with fine writing for the children—what he gives them is good enough. Structure be damned, polish be damned, everything be damned—except The Book and Una. Somehow they become inseparable in his mind. Where one is, there will the other be. To pen, then, to pen and

to Europe. Too bad *Ray Radford's Reward* was destroyed. But there must be some other reward. *Guy Grayson's Reward?* An excellent title, a splendid idea! Guy Grayson, widow's son, flags a train and averts a wreck. He has used it before? Twice before? What matter! Time is fleeting and Una waits abroad.

Guy is reluctant about coming. He sticks in Alger's brain and will not budge. What—can he no longer write juveniles? For shame, Horatio, you—the master of them all! Have you not before you another resolution—the hundredth of the year—whereasing you in glowing terms? Come, now, what will it be? Frank —Frank and Fearless? Very well, Horatio, let us have *Frank and Fearless!*

He starts today—two weeks from today it is done. A splendid record—who in all the world could do it faster? The publisher is grateful and transmits royalties in advance. Horatio hurries to the bank. "Keep this for me," he says, "I'll need it soon for I am going to Europe." Only a small portion does he hold out for immediate use. No extravagances now, nothing but economy. Everything down to scale. Cut down on shoes and neckties. Cut down on food. Cut down on gifts. Cut down on rent. Cut down on amusements. Only—how about a set of blocks? Remember how he used to build—towers? And only fifty cents a set! "Just to keep me occupied," he apologizes, "when I go back to the farm." And again, at the age of fifty-one, he builds.

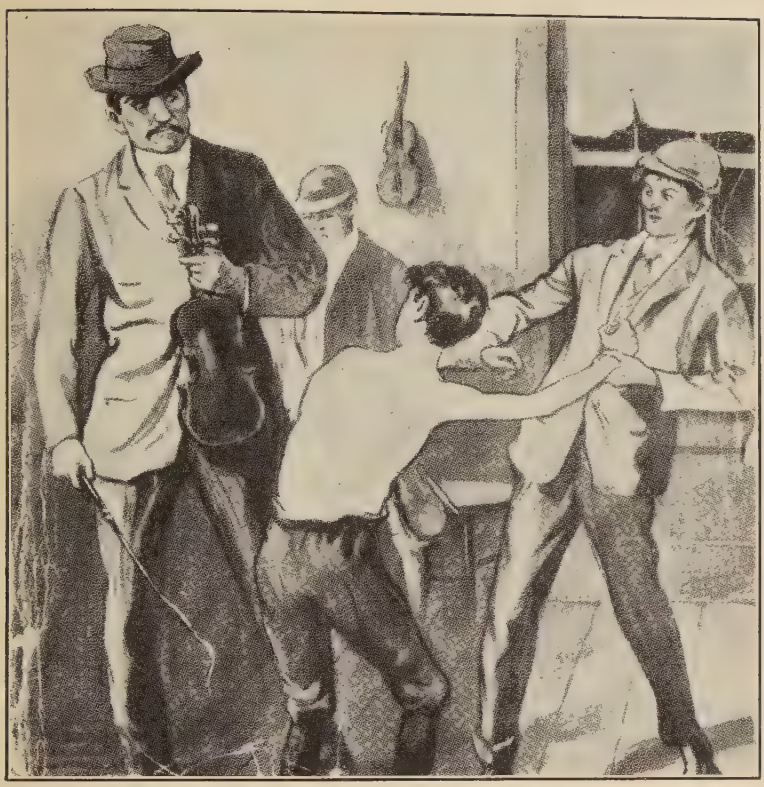
Escapade

In the year that the United States celebrated its hundredth anniversary of independence, Alexander T. Stewart, the richest merchant of his day, was laid to rest in the burial ground of St. Mark's church. Some months after the funeral an attempt was made to steal his body. It dawned on his family that further attempts might yet be made, the object being to hold the remains for ransom. To frustrate in advance any such endeavors the coffin was removed to another part of the cemetery, its exact location being kept practically secret—known only to two or three trusted persons. Despite these and other precautions, ghouls entered the cemetery on a stormy night in November of 1878, broke open the casket, and with its ghastly contents disappeared.

The entire nation was aroused. "Convulsed," one writer recorded. "Newspapers published page after page of comment, rumor and theory. A double guard was set over the tomb of Commodore Vanderbilt." Mrs. Stewart offered a reward of $25,000 for recovery of the body. Police in every State hunted zealously. Private detectives scoured the world. They chased clues to every corner of the globe, none of which brought them any nearer to the thieves who were demanding as their price a quarter of a million dollars. Two years elapsed before the family agreed to bargain with the culprits, and then, for a settlement of $20,000, the return of the body was effected. Gossip and discussion, however, did not end there. Newspapers and magazines continued to debate the case, most of them being concerned with theories on how the robbery had been perpetrated. It

became a subject at which many authors tried their hand. Mystery stories galore, with this crime the theme, were rushed to the presses. Horatio Alger wrote with the rest. That is, he wished to write. And with this object in mind he called on Frank Palmer, who, in his capacity as assistant sexton of St. Mark's, was best in a position to furnish whatever details were known. But Parker, who had been first to fall under the cloud of suspicion, refused to talk. The experience had fully unnerved him, and Alger, disconsolate, withdrew. On the way out he was accosted by a man who earlier had come on the same mission and had been as completely repulsed. This man, Caswell Hastings, was a reporter for the Philadelphia *North American.* Alger found in him entertaining company and for the several months that Hastings sojourned in New York they remained on friendly terms.

Ensconced on his farm for the second time, Alger discovered he had a neighbor. "I saw the lights," the neighbor explained, and then stood speechless with amazement. "Alger!" he gasped at length. "Hastings!" gasped the astonished Alger in his turn. They were glad to see each other. Caswell Hastings had resigned his post and now was striving to build a play out of the material he had accumulated on the Stewart affair. He considered himself fortunate to have Alger on hand to read what he had written. Seeking advice, he put before Horatio the four acts he had thus far assembled. Horatio praised them all, seeing in them everything excellent and nothing unworthy. Thereupon Hastings



Cover for an Alger opus:

Phil, the Fiddler
or, The Story of a Young Street Musician

looked upon himself as made. If so renowned an individual as Alger could praise his work, then nothing remained but to go forth and present his claim to immortality.

Hastings was not the only person Horatio saw on the farm. Walter Sherwood was another. Walter lived in a tent nearby. It was a temporary domicile he had erected, in which he was living by himself. Only eighteen years old, he had been set adrift by a stern father—his punishment for having squandered too much money at college. Alger soon became familiar with his life history. The result of the boy's disclosures formed the basis for the book he immediately undertook—*Walter Sherwood's Probation.*

When the book was completed he called on his friend Hastings, now industriously engaged on the fifth act of his drama. Hastings professed to sniff at it. "It's not much good," he patronized. "The real thing to do is a play." Nevertheless *Walter Sherwood's Probation* was received with acclaim. The public ate it up, while even had Alger watched for Hasting's play, he never would have seen it.

Well, Horatio is on speaking terms again with prosperity. "How much do you want to draw?" his publishers ask. Now he may have all he wants. One trip to Europe? Why, he can, if he chooses, go also to Japan, and then to Egypt, and then buy a dozen other farms. Money? All he can use! "Just say how much, Mr. Alger."

While the publishers are writing out a check, Horatio is tossing clothes into his trunk. He pauses only long enough to write a letter. A letter to Una in Europe.

"I am coming," is all he says.

XI
THE MAN WHO WROTE A BOOK

In Una's house, as the year drew to its close, they met again. Whatever flourish of emotion there transpired was due to him. Mrs. Garth, glad that circumstances detained her husband in Germany, received Alger with distinct cordiality; but there could be no doubt there was something less than ardor in her greeting. His original correspondence had become a bore, his expressions of esteem had long ago begun to pall. 'Why must he regale me with his crises," she wrote to her brother Eugene, in Italy. "Was there ever a man with such a mania for complaints! On Tuesday he arrived in the city and has besieged me ever since. I can't be rid of him though by now he should know I have no interest in his projects. He has taken rooms across the way and attempts to watch my every move. Twenty years ago this might have amused me, but you will agree—unchivalrous brother that you are—that I am beyond the age of kittishness."

To the fact that Alger was deeply moved at seeing her again Mrs. Garth makes eloquent testimony in her letter. "His tears fell over my hands," she wrote, "and

as fast as they fell just so fast did he kiss them away. Can you imagine a more ridiculous procedure? If the passion were momentary I would not mind it, but he repeats and repeats his intention of staying near me. What, dear Gene, am I to do?"

Eugene Williston's advice, whatever it was, in no way affected Alger's plan to abide by Una Garth. The temporary lodgings he had assumed soon took on the nature of a permanent residence. He fitted up a library and was prepared at a moment's notice to bolt himself in and turn industriously to his pen.

Outwardly Alger appeared none too well, but his spirits during this period were high. Daily at eleven he called on Una and lingered for the midday meal. His first flush of emotion was followed by a demeanor more sedate but never for an instant less fervent. Una, too, was becoming reconciled to his presence if not actually pleased. His devotion to her assumed the aspect of servility. He ran her errands and dusted the chairs and became petulant if some slight task which he might have performed were entrusted to some one else. He spent hours on pilgrimages to antique shops in quest of clocks because suddenly she had taken to collecting them. When the return of Russel Garth appeared imminent, Alger affected an indifference he did not feel. His conversation was less animated, a bronchial ailment came to plague him, and Una was alarmed at the prospect of having him ill on her hands. Her anguish was in no way mitigated by an ultimatum from her husband.

"I am not at all pleased to hear that your friend

Horatio is in Paris," wrote Russel Garth, "and I hope I have the good luck to find him gone when I arrive. Minister he may be but man he is not. I swear the more I think about him the more I am convinced he is one of the impossible ragamuffins he writes so much blather about. If he intends to remain in Paris you must let him know I am not inclined to see him. With your usual good sense you will understand that I don't want him around under any circumstances."

Within the next few days Mrs. Garth gave Alger some inkling of what might transpire if Russel returned and found him so close at hand. The tantrums she anticipated did not materialize. He agreed it would be best for him to leave the neighborhood, to move to sunnier quarters; and before the week was out he had transferred his belongings to another boulevard where he secured lodgings with a retired silk merchant and his family.

Not until two months after the reappearance of her husband did Mrs. Garth get word from Alger, but when a message came she determined to see him, with the consent of Russel if possible and without such consent if necessary.

"I have been a sick man," advised Horatio in his letter, "and but for you should be willing enough to take my chances with my God. There is, however, something that will not let me go; it keeps tugging at my heart and spinning in my mind. I feel sure it has come at last—the idea, the story, for which I have been waiting. To what besides your encouragement can I

attribute this success? For success I am sure it will be.

"I should like, dearest Una, to walk alone with you and tell you the story as it is forming in my mind. It will be called 'Tomorrow' and concerns a man who goes to the guillotine in place of his friend. The scene will be the French Revolution and I have already begun to collect facts for the background. The whole prospect of the book excites me. I am anxious to see it under way. Cannot I persuade you to meet me, to talk—to talk? Let us go somewhere for a day. Just a day? For old times' sake, *please.*"

Despite his appeal Alger cherished no hope that Una would respond. He felt that Russel was the imposing obstacle in her path. The masterpiece which he had so long craved with morbid appetite and which now seemed near at hand, was lost among the terrors he felt at being deserted and left alone. His melancholy bore him down and pummeled at the innermost recesses of his temperament. There were cries of rage and pain that sprang from the bottom of his nature that even those who were closest to him were never close enough to hear. Something that he wanted, something that he ached for, failed to come. Was it some ineffable sympathy, some extraordinary, heaven-high success, some touch of tenderness to temper the frigidity that clung to his heart since the passing away of Wing? Who was there now if not Una Garth to lead him out of his exile? Could 'Tomorrow' come without her—even *with* her, could it come? If Wing were back, with his wistful, yellow face,

would his mere presence be vital enough to restore a wilted courage and a devastated faith?

Enervated by his mental turbulence, Alger turned his glance toward Spain. There, under a warmer sun, he might regain some semblance of his former health. The rigors of the Paris winter were too cruel. Sleet and snow were too much like himself, cold and futile and unlasting. Spain with its vineyards and sprightly hues, the thrill of the jingle of castanets—Alger turned his glance toward Spain.

An unforeseen consequence of Alger's letter to Mrs. Garth was the sudden return to Paris of Eugene Williston. To him Una had confided her intention of ignoring her husband's command and going at the first opportunity to see "the man who writes absurd fables about ambitious boys". The extent of Williston's alarm cannot be overestimated. He had no desire at this time to see his sister embroiled in a domestic skirmish. His shipping losses were mounting and he foresaw an occasion when additional funds would be of tremendous importance. Insurance rates were higher and the banks were less disposed to gamble on his enterprises. Only Russel could help him in an extremity and he resolved not to have this source of revenue closed to him. Una might see whom she chose, but under more auspicious circumstances.

Williston made his position clear and exacted from Una a promise of temporary fidelity to her husband. That she would have kept her pledge cannot be denied, but the receipt of a farewell message from Alger tended

to upset her nerves and change her plans. In her diary she made a note "to see Horatio before he goes, no matter what the cost". She visited the silk merchant's address and inquired for Alger. Her stay was brief but in the few hours she was there she administered a balm that had much of the quality of a genial Spanish sun.

During that visit we know she heard further details of Alger's story. We know she asked him if he had ever read Dickens and particularly the *Tale of Two Cities.* We know that Alger remembered the story before she went away and that he admitted his idea must have been borrowed and that he would have to start again. But discouraged he surely was not. On her advice he relinquished his plot but clung tenaciously to his title. 'Tomorrow' was a good name for any book, he insisted, and in this he refused to be budged. Having once again seen Una he was well enough, his mind was keen enough, to build a novel around a name.

"I have met men whose faith in an idea has made them disgustingly wealthy and others whose faith in a party has carried them to high places in politics. Yet never have I met a man with such faith in himself as Horatio Alger, and with such ridiculous little cause. His naïveté makes me sorry for him. He seems to have been born an orphan and never since to have had a parent."

That is what Una Garth wrote.

The journey to Spain now passed out of Alger's mind. Communication with Mrs. Garth having been re-established, he was content to remain in his boulevard quarters. He set himself to bear up against the cold;

left his rooms only when the sun was high and never, during the winter, after dark. Indoors he occupied himself with books. For a brief interval following his perusal of the *Three Musketeers* he was enthusiastic about a companionpiece which would involve the adventures of a group of boys in their struggle for fame and fortune. Whatever became of this thought the records do not show, but nothing is in existence to indicate that he attempted to develop it with the written word.

The name "Tomorrow" haunted him. It acquired the guise of a living thing, a human being almost with whom he could hold conversation at night when the gas lights flickered on the damp pavements outside and horses' hoofs clattered noisily upon the cobblestones. "Tomorrow" was his friend, his conscience, his destiny. Nothing that he did was done without reference to its effect upon this unborn story.

He was shut up alone with a single word; the hands of the clock seemed to him to make a weary passage around the hours. The days with their brief outdoor interludes went by on clipped and bleeding wings. The black and misty nights through which he once could see his glittering "Tomorrow" unrolled an extra cover of impenetrable murk and the novel that was to be lost itself in the shadows. Then it was that Alger forsook for a period his dream of enduring fiction and transferred his allegiance to history. A history of the world in popular form, that would be devoured by the masses, that would acquaint the man in the street with the facts of civilization from the time of its beginning up to the

present date, with an occasional peek into the future. Quickly the possibilities shaped themselves in his mind. There would be three volumes, "Yesterday", "Today", and—it was inevitable—"Tomorrow". On the covers would be a flag that was the flag of all nations, even the nations that had been ground into the dust and now were no more than memories.

This extraordinary conception acquired such huge proportions even in vague contemplation that Alger was cowed at the mere idea of starting. A vision came to him of the years of labor, of fact finding and note making, of daily ploddings to libraries and museums, of endless correspondence—and was he to become a mere digger for antiquated documents and isolated dates? Of what imagination need a man be possessed to potter in vaults and extricate manuscripts wheezing in dust?

Once again there came upon Horatio an era of panic and it carried him into the Spring. But then the world of a sudden was born for him anew. Nothing that was had ever been before. For the first time grass grew green and vocal cords found lodgment in the throats of birds. Gay was the earth and gay all the substance thereof. God had slumbered, and now He was awake, or He had died and this was the resurrection. Histories are vague and biographies built around holes, but of the resurrection there is no question, no one may quibble, none may scoff or out of sheer bravado dare to disaffirm. Without warning that epochal boon befell the world on a balmy night in April. On that early Spring night

Horatio Alger wrote the first chapter of a book to be called "Tomorrow".

Mrs. Garth, in a frenzy of elation over the news received from Alger that he finally was hard at work, once again showed herself at the lodgings of her friend. She read the text as far as he had gone and listened faithfully to a recital of what additional was to come. "I spent the afternoon with Horatio," reads her diary entry for the day, "and saw the opening paragraphs of his 'Tomorrow'. May the Lord spare the man from a knowledge of his own incapacity!"

Dismayed? In a season of leaden skies and penetrating winds he might have been, but with the smell of young blossoms in his nostrils Alger never paused. Maybe Una was right in telling him to turn aside, to pause until a plot more worthy developed itself in his fancy. Maybe "Tomorrow" was not for today, but something else surely must be. See the birds? See the buds on trees? Where were they two weeks ago? Would it matter if any one knew? Now they were here—actualities, real, alive. One moment a scrap of paper empty of words; upon the page a little later a brilliant narrative. Horatio spread his sheets before him. His story would come as the buds and birds came. The sympathetic quiver about the lips of Una could not stay him, nor the gibes of Russel Garth, nor the editors of newspapers, nor unrestrained guffaws among the literati. Into the night and through it Alger wrote and filled the pages with words. They came without effort, flew from

his pen as a swallow flies in the air—gracefully, easily, and with abandon.

Alger was well on the way to another book. He finished it and it was printed in a green cloth cover and ran to seventy thousand words, and the name he gave it was *Struggling Upward.*

She decided he was mad. She pretended to be afraid. She hid herself from him. The last sight of the wildness in his eyes slit her consciousness with a vivid sense of the spark she had been breathing on. Home was her refuge. For fear he might spring upon her in the street she made herself a prisoner in her rooms. His messages poured in on her. No end of them. A sharp, straight, unswerving stream. Never a zigzag, never a waver. "See me, for God Almighty's sake!" Concierges knocking at her door. 'A message, madame." Clean boys, dirty boys, little boys and big boys—strutting, running, limping, hopping along with letters. "What have I done? Tell me, for Christ's sake!" Short, fat men wobbling along, tall, skinny men prancing along, with messages to Una Garth from Alger.

Eugene rushes to her aid. "Get him away," she begs. "If Russel finds out——!" Horatio has become too dangerous for her. Her nerve is shaken. She sees her home broken up. Needed, then, at once—a plan to make him quit. A ruse to call him off. A lie to deceive him. Something, anything—to make him see that all is off forever.

A thumping on Alger's door. Stifling a groan he

wrenches himself from his couch. A greedy brilliance animates his swollen eyes. "Word at last," he cries, "word from my beloved."

It is Williston who stands there, sadness writ across his features, struggling to be at ease. He performs magnificently. "Tell me," supplicates Horatio in a voice that makes his caller start. "What——?"

Eugene clears his throat. "She is dying," Eugene mumbles.

No, no, dear God, it cannot be! Lovely Una reaching out her darling hands toward eternity? It cannot, cannot, cannot be. God must not, God dare not! Horatio will make war against Him. Horatio will oppose the will of God. Horatio will defy the heavens. Horatio will force the Father from His throne.

Speaking gently, murmuring pacifying phrases, Williston at length induces calmness. "How can you help her by carrying on in such a fashion? Your violence communicates itself to her. There is a human telepathy that provokes a fever in her. If you care for her you will let her rest. For a time you must not disturb her. You must stay away, your letters must cease. For a short while you must not attempt to see her. Then will her chances of getting well be better and the nearer will be your chance of seeing her. Do you understand?"

Solemnly Eugene goes away, but a triumphant smirk plays across his face.

On bended knees Horatio rescinds his challenge and asks forgiveness of the Lord. "I pray thee, God, bestow on Una Thy greatest care. Be merciful to her. Restore

her to health that I may go to her. Give her strength, I pray thee."

While Una Garth, encouraged by Eugene's report, ventures an evening at the theatre.

The Book again. To lay at Una's feet the manuscript. To celebrate her return to health when she shall return to health; to signify his reverence; a testimonial to her, for all men everywhere to read. Take form, O plot! Sing forth, O words! Story—story, leap forth! He holds himself rigid. Holds himself taut. Hatless, he skirts the thoroughfares. He batters himself around his room. He will budge mountains, he will build railroads, he will cause snow to fly, he will cause suns to shine, he will lead armies, he will set up statues, pull down stars, rule governments, sway mobs, discover mines, conquer jungles, make white black—to write The Book!

Still "Tomorrow". Still but a title. Still——

But not now. Wait! What is that shadow on the wall? What is that shadow on the wall! See it—see it—that shadow on the wall! Sublimely cautious he tiptoes toward the shadow. And it grows larger, larger and larger. With his every furtive footstep forward it grows larger. Hush! He crouches, poises, pauses, hurtles forward with a screech to clasp it. And he screams, and screams, and screams.

Neighbors become alarmed. Something terrible has happened. Gendarmes arrive. He fights them off. He bites and kicks. They must go, they must leave him

alone. What God damned fools they are to burst upon him when he is about to corral the idea for The Book!

Outside a great crowd collects and jeers. He is led away. At first the crowd follows. Gradually it becomes smaller. Then only a few straggle on behind. Then only one: a young man, neatly attired. He continues to the hospital. He will not see Alger in the public ward—how dare they! Alger is to have a private room. This man will pay for it. "Here," he says, "I'll pay you in advance." A relative, the attendants guess. But he is not. He is only a man for whom as a boy Horatio Alger bought a blacking box and brush.

In the hospital Horatio becomes a child again. He writes an honest, loving letter to his mother—to his mother, who has been dead these many years.

XII
THE LIST GROWS LONGER

"Is Mr. O'Connor in?"

"Yes," said the boy who tended the desk.

"Tell him, please, that Mr. Alger has come home."

What O'Connor wrote, six years later:

"I did not recognize him. I could not at first believe it was him. I said to myself this cannot be Horatio Alger. He was thin as a rail and pale as a sheet, all hollow in his cheeks. His eyes seemed to have got bigger and brighter and gave him a funny wild look. It seemed then he was dying. I knew it was Alger for certain when I heard him speak. His voice—that did not change. Well, I took him home with me and put him to bed."

What Alger wrote, ten years later:

"I went right up from the ship to the lodging house. When Charlie saw me he almost cried. He realized at once, apparently, how ill and weak I was. He was the only man whose questions I would have answered but he asked none. He put me in a carriage and drove to his

His soul draws nearest unto
God above,
Who to his brother ministers
in love.

Horatio Alger Jr.
March 8/1890.

An example of Alger's handwriting,
For the benefit of the hand-writing experts of today

home. I felt somehow happy in the thought of his friendship and I said a prayer for him before I fell asleep."

What the boy wrote, fifty-three years later:

"The incident remains fairly clear in my mind, more because of O'Connor than of Alger. Up to 9 o'clock at night the boys used to take turns at minding the office. You see, every boy was assigned for one hour. Boys who had jobs were assigned in the night and those without were assigned in the day. I happened to be on duty early in the evening—something around seven o'clock. The door opened and a man came in. I could tell he was sick but that made little impression at the time. In those days we could see lots of men sick or starving on the streets. He asked for Mr. O'Connor and I said I would get him. At the moment I did not connect his name with the books he had written. O'Connor always talked to us about Alger and my idea of him was something entirely different from what I saw.

"Mr. O'Connor was in the large sleeping room when I went for him. Every night he used to go in to see that all the beds were in order. 'Mr. O'Connor,' I said, 'there's a man outside who says he has come home. He says his name is Mr. Alger.' O'Connor looked at me. 'Alger?' he said. Then he rushed out ahead of me.

"Mr. Alger was still standing by the desk when I got into the office after O'Connor. My recollection of what they said is faint. The thing I remember clearly is that O'Connor had tears in his eyes. When he ordered me

to hurry out and get a carriage I knew something unusual had happened."

O'Connor was the truest friend Horatio Alger had. From the first the Irish superintendent had felt for Alger an affection which, as the years went by, ripened and deepened and bordered at times on idolatry. It was not within his province to understand Alger. He accepted him as he accepted his religion and he would as soon have cross-examined a priest during confession as Alger on his motives. If and when he had cause to wonder he kept his curiosity to himself. Over what Alger did he mused sometimes, and sometimes brooded, but never gave expression to his thoughts.

Now he wondered why Alger was ill, wondered where he had been and what he had done. Yet he asked no questions. "You will be all right," he said to Alger, though he doubted the truth of what he said. When Alger, ignoring his remark, simply murmured, "Some day I'll tell you all about it, Charlie," Charlie acquiesced with a smile and a "Yes, that's all right—some day later, when you're feeling well." And later Horatio did tell him all about it, desiring, like Othello, to be correctly portrayed, and intimating to O'Connor—as though O'Connor were his biographer—that he should "nothing extenuate nor aught set down in malice". As if O'Connor would have uttered a word of reproach about the man he most revered!

O'Connor gave up his own room to Alger. He called in his own physician. Out of his own pocket he paid, for

several months, the expense of maintaining him. Twice a day he played truant from his affairs at the Newsboys' Lodging House and headed for home for a few moments' chat with Alger. The more querulous the patient, the more zealous his attention. The more demands the patient made, the more eager was he to see them fulfilled. For O'Connor, with rare devotion, had faith in what Alger yet would do in the way of books for boys. What brought sadness to him were the references Alger made, in delirium, to One Great Book—allusions which O'Connor could not comprehend. To him all books by Alger were great books. Was not all boydom reading them? Would not boydom continue to read them through the centuries? O'Connor himself read Alger's stories to his charges—read them as seriously as he read to them each evening at supper a passage from the gospel. He held that no books their equal had ever before been written. . . . Alger made him sad, too, when, lying in bed, still in the grip of fever, he would express a longing to do other things besides books. "There must be," he once sighed, "parts of the world still unexplored." Such fancies startled O'Connor. Instantly he saw Alger equipping expeditions. And grieved at the prospect of Alger doing anything except literature for boys.

These things made him sad. Other things annoyed him. Alger found a childish glee in showing O'Connor epitaphs he was preparing for himself. This practice, a fancy pampered during his illness, he clung to so long as he heard objections. "Here lies the body of Horatio

Alger, Jr.," he wrote, and added, "Well, what of it?" "Beneath this stone," he wrote, "lies the body of Horatio Alger, Jr.," and added, with some absence of originality, "Well, what of it?" O'Connor growled at the irreverence of "Here lies a good fellow who spent his life while he had it." It would not have been so bad for a common mortal—but for a minister who was a minister's son! Bursting into verse, Horatio wrote:

Beneath this soil a Yankee lies,
A Yankee very crankee.
Move not his bones or he'll turn stones,
And leap to life to spank 'ee.

His favorite epitaph, however, composed toward the close of his life, ran: "Six feet underground reposes Horatio Alger, *Helping Himself* to a part of the earth, not *Digging for Gold* or *In Search of Treasure,* but *Struggling Upward* and *Bound to Rise* at last *In a New World* where it shall be said he is *Risen from the Ranks.*" That, O'Connor thought, was slick.

Empty and sometimes intensely stupid, squibs and epitaphs made up of names of his books afforded him a riotous pastime. Here and there, in some admirer's album, he left an autograph composed of his books' titles, of which, among those found, this is the most sensible:

Strive and Succeed, the world's temptations flee—
Be *Brave and Bold,* and *Strong and Steady* be.
Go *Slow and Sure,* and prosper then you must—
With *Fame and Fortune,* while you *Try and Trust.*

Three weeks after his return from Europe Horatio suddenly grew worse. Conceded by the physician an even chance for life, he was not himself willing to exert any great effort in his own behalf. In reality it was O'Connor who pulled him through. The faithful Irishman stepped in, as years before Horatio's mother had stepped in, and resolved that he should not die. And that evening he called together the members of the Newsboys' Lodging House. Two hundred of them assembled in the hall and under the leadership of their superintendent got on their knees and bowed their heads in prayer. "Good God, restore him to health. Take not away Horatio Alger. . . ."

Bulletins concerning the author's progress were posted by O'Connor in the office of the lodging house. He sent boys in groups of two and three to visit him. After a while the bulletins noted improvement. "Mr. Alger is able to walk around today." But it was a lingering illness, lasting for two years. Not all this time was Alger incapacitated, for he managed during intervals of comparative strength and good cheer to write an occasional book. Once wholly well he turned out books with a vengeance. It did strike him that he might achieve a certain perpetual fame by writing more books than anybody else had ever written.

O'Connor's strict supervision is the main reason why Alger was less well known than his books. O'Connor turned away many who came to see the man. In numerous instances there was just cause, for fellows with wild

schemes attempted to reach him. After a time some people expressed doubt there was such a man as Horatio Alger. A common question, even today, is, "Was there really a man by that name?" Alger was highly indignant at reports of his non-existence. People never doubted there was such a man as Mark Twain—at one time they simply stopped believing that he was still alive. When he reported the report of his death as having been greatly exaggerated the public laughed and readily accepted the statement. When Alger issued a statement in refutation of the fact that he had never lived at all, even then there were a few who remained skeptical. Of course the great majority did accept the fact of his existence—their information came from the boys who lived in the lodging house. And these boys, who really had affection for him, dispensed myths concerning his person comparable only to the myths they hawked in the streets in last minute endeavors to sell their two or three remaining papers. There is nothing these boys would not have done for him. One of his protégés—a boy whose tutor he had been—remarked at the opening of the Spanish-American War that "Mr. Alger could raise a regiment of boys in New York alone who would fight for him to the death".

What the boys said the newspapers took up and the public liked to believe: that he was the most liberal contributor to the upkeep of the lodging house (he wasn't —he didn't have the money); that he wrote stories all day long and all through the night (he couldn't—he hadn't strength enough); that he never drank, smoked,

chewed or swore (he did not drink, smoke or chew); that he was the greatest man in the world. . . . And currency was given to the idea that any man who, beginning life in poverty, achieved success, was an Horatio Alger boy. Newspapers said, "This is the story of a man who might be one of Horatio Alger's heroes." Newspapers today print similar references.

Despite Charles O'Connor's vigilance men got to Alger with schemes which, had they been carried out, surely would have ruined him. He was asked to lend his name to an appeal for subscriptions to "a fund for the establishment of a ranch in a Western state (to be selected later) at which children in sickly condition will be instructed in the ways of nature and restored to the full vigor of glowing health." O'Connor took Alger's name off the committee before its proponents were exposed. O'Connor also took his name off a committee formed "to raise an endowment which will insure to future generations of Americans the birthplaces of great Americans of the past." Indeed, whenever O'Connor was away from Alger for any length of time he found it necessary to check up on what Alger had done in the interim. He was forever keeping or taking Alger's name off something.

One exquisite undertaking from which Alger reluctantly withheld support—which support, in fact, he actually volunteered in spite of O'Connor but immediately after withdrew—concerned the organization of a weekly newspaper for boys. This was an ambitious

and ingeniously contrived project which found birth in the mind of Zachary Stanhope. Stanhope had numerous plans for making money, his last one involving the embezzlement of several thousand dollars, for which he spent a good many thousand hours in prison. The newspaper under consideration—the *American Boys' Weekly*—was to have its own special writers and its own artists. All subjects of interest to the juvenile mind were to be included—sports, boys' clubs, camping, education, religion, and so on, Alger was offered the vice-presidency of the company and the editorship of the journal. His stories were to appear serially in the *Weekly*. Exclusively in the *Weekly*. Stanhope guaranteed a minimum initial circulation of a hundred thousand copies. That these copies were to be mailed out free he did not mention, or that each one was to carry a plea for subscriptions to stock in the American Boys' Weekly Publishing Company "of which the Rev. Horatio Alger, Jr., best beloved author in the world, is vice president". Alger did not know, until after O'Connor's investigation and report, that parents were to be urged to buy this stock for their children, "so that when they reach the age when it becomes necessary for them to make their own way in the world, they will have ready to hand an amount of capital which will give them a better and fairer start than Ragged Dick had."

Such incidents as these made O'Connor urge on Horatio Alger the need of a secretary. His early suggestions were fruitless for Alger could not see the necessity. Ultimately, however, he submitted to persuasion and

Frank A. Hoppe, a young man of twenty-six, was appointed. Hoppe was a product of the lodging house. Part of his youth he had spent as one of its tenants. He met favor in O'Connor's eyes not so much because he was naturally keen and witty as because he was frail and unable, however willing, to assume any task requiring even moderate strength. Half heartedly Alger engaged him and half heartedly retained him. He complained to O'Connor that Hoppe always seemed to be laughing. "At you?" O'Connor asked, indignantly. "Well, no, not at me exactly——." But he wasn't sure. Further, what Hoppe considered the inalienable right of a secretary—reading his employer's mail—Alger did not hesitate to regard as spying.

Grover Cleveland and Benjamin Harrison were the candidates for President of the United States in 1888. Each candidate laid stress on reform in the Civil Service, Cleveland claiming credit for having inaugurated the reforms during his first administration, Harrison asserting that the Republicans forced them on the administration. It was one of the main issues of the campaign and the newspapers of the two leading political parties gave it prominence. From O'Connor's mind evolved the idea of having Alger expound to the boys at the lodging house the meaning of Civil Service and the possibilites it held for men regardless of creed or fortune. Accepting the assignment, Alger prepared a thesis and read it to the boys on election day. O'Connor, then as always, introduced the speaker with a gorgeous flourish. Remind-

ing the boys that that day the country was pondering the merits of two great men, he proceeded to eulogize Cleveland and Harrison both. Then, in a flurry of enthusiastic phrases, he remarked: "You will now have the pleasure of listening to a man who is, in my humble opinion, as great as the two candidates who are running for office today. Though it is not something which he seeks, the office of president of the United States for Horatio Alger is not beyond the realm of possibility. Boys—Mr. Alger will now address you."

As friend and patron of the youngsters Alger had been merely generous. As chief executive of the nation there was no telling what he might do for them. So they responded lustily, filling the room with their shrill voices. O'Connor beamed and Alger smiled graciously. If the boys were less vociferous in their outburst when Alger completed his reading it should be attributed not wholly to the dryness of his subject. He was, it seems, going over in his mind something that was not related to Civil Service, and, his attention thus divided, he was less than scintillating. It was O'Connor's introduction that bothered him and that of a sudden opened new vistas of life for him. For days and weeks his thinking processes were jabbed into chaos by the constantly intruding end of a sentence: The office of president of the United States is not beyond the realm of possibility.

It sounded good. He liked it. Mentally he petted it and speculated on its appearance in print—Horatio Alger, President of the United States. He tasted it with his tongue and furtively smiled. Though he had no

political aspirations then, before or after—still! He conjured up scenes of himself being presented to vast assemblages—hundreds of thousands of people—amid a crescendo of applause and the strains of stirring music by military bands, to the inspiriting boom-boom of guns in salute, to the warming peal of bells from surrounding steeples, with skyrockets rising in ever widening circles of color and darting sprays of flame. "Ladies and gentlemen—the President of the United States!" Then his fancy summoned a picture of himself—of his own calm demeanor, his slight, dignified, condescending bow in response. The greatest book ever written in itself was a stupendous idea—but written by the President!

But dreams of greater fame interfered no whit with *Lester's Luck,* or *Joe's Luck,* or *Luck and Pluck.* Indeed, Lester Gray becomes "rich in his own right" and "is recognized as one of Seth Compton's heirs". Joe Mason, from being alone in the world and possessed of nothing he could call his own, becomes "a very rich man, and now lives in a handsome residence on one of the hills that overlook the bay. He has an excellent wife. . . ." John Oakley, starting from scratch, finds stretching before him "a noble manhood and an honorable career".

"I don't believe," said Frank Hoppe, "anything short of physical incapacity could have stopped Alger from writing juveniles. They had become a habit with him, quite as much as eating and sleeping. His time had to be occupied and he was accustomed to keeping busy with one manuscript or another. Whether he felt good

or bad, he wrote. In my years of association with him I do not recall any expression of pleasure or satisfaction coming from him in connection with his work. Still he could no sooner have discarded it than he could have discarded his skin and taken on another."

If Alger's labors continued uninterruptedly, so did his spells of irritability. On completing a book he never failed to find something of aggravating import. "At such times," said Hoppe, "it was wise to stay clear of him. He had a wonderful power for making life miserable." Usually the publishers bore the brunt of his anger. At one time he was enraged to think his books were not illustrated. He refused to write another word unless pictures accompanied his text. "Good Lord!" exclaimed Hoppe, "what I had to listen to about illustrations!" The publishers capitulated and the next book had pictures. They, however, failed to please him and he insisted on the right to choose the parts of his text he wanted pictures for. The settlement of this point was followed by his demand for pictures in color. On this score the publishers held firm. "If you will agree to pay for the cost of the additional plates we shall be glad to use as many colors as you choose."

Many disputes issued from his propensity for writing prefaces. Some prefaces he wrote were three thousand words long. It was impossible to convince him that such lengthy preludes had no place in juveniles and he compelled the publishers to accept them. But the publishers always managed at the last moment to omit them. The longest preface he turned out was for *A Backwoods*

Boy, or the Story of Abraham Lincoln. He almost wrote more of a history of Lincoln in the preface than he did in the book. Finishing it in August of 1883, he turned back the calendar somewhat in order to sign it with his name and the date July 4th. When the first edition of the book came out without the preface he threatened to take his case to court. To appease him a new edition was printed, *with* a preface but reduced to a mere handful of words.

With some prefaces he went into detailed explanations of the how and why of his story, where the idea came from, how he developed it, how he checked his facts. In an unused preface for *Jack's Ward, or The Boy Guardian,* he vouched for the existence of such a flower girl as Ida Clifton. In another preface, for *The Erie Train Boy,* he narrated the actual circumstances surrounding his meeting with a boy corresponding to Fred Fenton. That wasn't published, either. Several times he discoursed on his visits to various buildings and places of interest in order to obtain accurate descriptions. No doubt he would have manufactured a preface of heroic proportions had he written a book about Norman Carr. Only he did not write a book about Norman.

It was O'Connor who brought the boy to him, saying he had talent for writing and was deserving of instruction. The task appealed to Horatio and he set the lad to work copying passages from Dickens. He gave him lessons in spelling. He also took the boy with him on his tours around the city. He cherished the hope of making Norman famous. What stood in the way was

Norman himself. Norman Carr had no idea of going in for Dickensese. He wanted to write books like Alger —thereby causing Alger to forsake him.

In all his contentions with the publishers Alger had the support of O'Connor. There was no quarrel with them in which O'Connor did not uphold him. Not even when Alger obviously was wrong did he decline to side with him, for he held strongly to the belief that publishers were all unscrupulous middlemen growing rich on the labor and inspiration of unbusinesslike authors.

The close, intimate contact of the two men was not diminished when Alger again took up lodgings by himself. A mile apart, they still might have been living together for all the difference it made in their contacts. The superintendent stopped for him every morning and walked with him down to the Newsboys' Lodging House, where Alger remained for most of the day. In the evenings they walked together as far as Alger's door. Often they would stay down to dine, then go to the home of one or the other and talk through a good portion of the night. Not infrequently, in Alger's room, O'Connor would sit and smoke while Horatio finished a chapter or began a new one. Inevitably, in such a case, O'Connor would ask to have the manuscript read to him and, being obliged, would express his thanks and approval.

Among O'Connor's accomplishments was a slight skill at the piano. Since Alger had come to grow fond of music, he purchased a piano and installed it in his room for the express purpose of hearing his companion

play. Horatio himself would have enjoyed playing. "Sometimes," he wrote, "I sit before it, very much alone, with only a wish that I might be familiar with its mysteries. Melodies can break the silence and drive away the pessimism which fills some hours." He was not averse to learning, even then. Consulting several teachers, he was told he could master the technique sufficiently to play as he wanted to. Perhaps he would have followed out this desire. Perhaps he would have found himself capable of bringing forth the melodies wherewith to sooth his aching hours. But something else intervened and filled a deeper void in his heart. Nurtured as he had been in an atmosphere of religion, he had found religion, or rather the preacher of it closest to him —his father—irksome. The solace he should have derived was lacking. But being inherently of a religious turn of mind his nature required for its partial satisfaction some spiritual prop. Mary Baker Eddy, with her widely promulgated new religion, seemed for a moment to be able to furnish it. Horatio took up Christian Science and gave it a trial. Whether or not it failed to bring the consolation he sought remains unknown; but in six months he gave it up and practiced God in the old way.

O'Connor left the Newsboys' Lodging House early one day, complaining of a headache. Announcing his intention of going home to rest, he agreed to call on Alger during the evening. Alger remained in his room until ten o'clock, working on a manuscript. Then, thinking it likely his friend was too ill to call, he took up

his papers and directed his steps toward O'Connor's residence. He found the man still fully clothed, feeling too miserable to venture out. After conversing for a short while, O'Connor undressed and got into bed, first receiving Alger's promise to read to him the manuscript he had brought along. Horatio fulfilled his promise. He read several chapters of what was to be *Adrift in New York*. At the conclusion he saw that O'Connor had fallen asleep. When Alger arose the next morning he went again to his friend. But the man was still asleep. Instead of leaving at once, as he had intended, Alger paused long enough to take a second glance at O'Connor. He was puzzled. It seemed that the man had not changed his position. He seemed to be lying exactly as he had been lying ten hours before.

From New York and Brooklyn a thousand urchins gathered for the funeral. All of the night preceding Alger had remained awake, writing a eulogy on the life of his closest friend. When the time came for him to speak he forgot the lengthy encomiums he had carefully prepared. Instead he said: "Charles O'Connor was the best friend that man or boy could have. God was good in giving him to us. No one can say how much he meant to us. Everywhere boys know the man Charles O'Connor was. He was the best friend I have ever known. He was the kindest and the least selfish. I loved him—all of us loved him. God will find a place for him close to His throne."

. . . . . .



Cover for an Alger opus:
Adrift in New York
or, Tom and Florence Braving the World

They called his first book Undying. And They the People called Undying his fiftieth and his hundred and twentieth. They grew accustomed to his books—to their coming, two, three, five a year. The announcement of a new Alger book was not a surprise. It would have been a surprise if the announcements had stopped. So far as his readers were concerned one might as well have lifted Sunday out of the week as Alger's books out of the scheme of things. The same outcry would have arisen. No matter how strange it may seem now, Horatio Alger, Jr. was the most widely read writer of the ages. Even the turn of the century did not stay his influence. After 1900 a full decade elapsed before his popularity began to wane. Prior to 1900 his books sold for one dollar and a quarter. Then new publishers took hold and reduced the price to ten cents. At both prices they were best sellers. When the World War came along the publishers were forced to charge a little more. And at fifteen cents a copy the sale of the books fell off. Even the Sunday schools, which had purchased hundreds of thousands of copies, ceased sending orders.

Perhaps the modern generation must have quick changes in literature as in style. In Alger's day it was not important. Alger never bothered to change his formula. "It was easy to see," he said of Ragged Dick, "that had he been clean and well dressed he would have been decidedly good looking." That made a hit. Thereafter in all his books the hero needed only soap and water and new clothes to become decidedly good looking. Most boys at twelve like to think of them-

selves as generals or pirates or policemen or locomotive engineers. Though they may be playing marbles in the mud or bellywhopping through slush, they also like to think of themselves as good looking. Most times there are little girls in the offing.

The United States in Alger's day was less wealthy than it is now. There were more poor people, fewer millionaires who could transmit fortunes to their offspring. The most omnivorous readers of Horatio Alger were poor boys. Boys who wanted to grow rich. Alger was writing books while James B. Duke, the tobacco king, was peddling the tobacco his father planted and while James A. Farrell, who was to become president of the United States Steel Corporation, was a laboring boy in a wire mill. Alger was turning out his books while Henry Ford worked for two dollars and fifty cents a week as a polisher of steam engines, and while Darwin P. Kingsley, who was to head the largest insurance company in the world, did chores on a farm in Vermont. While Alger wrote, Julius Rosenwald, who was to direct the destinies of the world's largest mail order house, peddled chromos from door to door in Springfield, Illinois.

While Alger sat behind his pen, George Eastman, of Kodak fame, sat behind another pen, for three dollars a week, in an insurance office. The man who built the Panama Canal—General George W. Goethals—was an errand boy in Alger's day, and Charles M. Schwab, before he dreamed of Bethlehem Steel, was driving a coach between Loretto and Cresson Station, in Pennsylvania.

Frank A. Vanderlip, one day to become president of the greatest bank in the country, was milking cows, Thomas A. Edison earned a precarious living as a newsboy, John D. Rockefeller was out of a job—all while Horatio Alger wrote books for them.

For almost fifty years his books affected the youth of the United States. From 1870 to 1900 his power was at its height. Poor boys read him most avidly but rich boys did not neglect him. All types of boys, all classes, embraced his stories. Boys who were to roll in gold and others who were to stand on bread lines, boys who were to fill pulpits and boys who were to end their days in prisons—all read his stories. Joyce Kilmer, who wrote poems before the last war claimed him, read Horatio Alger. So did the idol of the stage—John Drew; and a favorite of the two-a-day, Pat Rooney. So did Christopher Mathewson, who pitched the fadeaway for John McGraw, and so did Gerald Chapman, who was hung by the neck till dead. Phil Payne, who gave his life for his newspaper when his airplane stopped flying somewhere over the Atlantic, was in his boyhood a devoted reader. On Knute K. Rockne, of Notre Dame, Alger's books "created a fine impression and stimulated ambition".

James R. Quirk, the best known editor in the realm of motion pictures, "certainly did read the Horatio Alger books". Rather proudly he adds, "Every one that I could get hold of. I spent days, as a kid, at the public libraries reading them. The Horatio Alger books could have no influence but one of helpfulness

with any boy. If they performed no other service than to impress a lad with the dignity of selling newspapers, of blacking boots, or any other honorable work, they performed a great service to impressionable youth."

Another editor, whose fame has spread over the world —he who made of the *Ladies' Home Journal* the most discussed magazine of its kind—Edward W. Bok, as a boy read every book by Alger that he could lay hands on and believes they "did much to stimulate my desire to make my life productive". And then, as though anticipating the attitude of other men, he adds, "They can laugh all they like at Alger now, but he pulled his weight in the world when he was with us."

Upton Sinclair read him and was influenced by his books; so was the chewing gum man, William Wrigley, Jr. Indeed, when Mr. Wrigley was quite young he "read all of Horatio Alger's works" and today "is absolutely convinced that they did have a helpful effect" on his life. Will Durant, author of *The Story of Philosophy,* as a boy worshipped other authors and says he is "sorry, but I didn't have brains enough to read Alger". Another philosopher, Columbia University's John Dewey, though mindful of no influence on himself by Alger, still remembers his "enjoyment at the time of reading".

John Erskine, who remodeled Helen of Troy, did not read Alger. "This is," he writes, "an immense confession for which, perhaps, I ought to apologize." Another man who fell by the wayside is Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. But he is thoroughly repentant and

"sorry to say that I am one of the unregenerates". The first man to fly over the North Pole—Commander Richard E. Byrd—he never read Alger. But he also is very sorry to say so and "rather ashamed, too". Walter Lippmann, editor of the New York *World,* "read one or two of the Alger books only because I was told that they were vulgar tripe and that I should not read them." He does not remember being "the least amused or edified" by them. Edmund Lester Pearson, sometime editor of publications for the New York public libraries, though he read no more than *Phil the Fiddler,* recalls today even the minutest details.

While finer American writers were writing swan songs—Emerson his *Terminus,* Whittier his *Hazel Blossoms,* the Cary sisters their *Last Poems,* Longfellow his *Aftermath* and Holmes his *Iron Gate*—Horatio Alger rose to his glory. Unwaveringly he beat a path to the hearts of the masses while the literati fought over the merits of Henry James with his *Portrait of a Lady* and *The Europeans.* Regularly and unconcernedly he wrote of *Rufus and Rose* and *Randy of the River,* and won the plaudits of millions, while William Dean Howells, with enormous erudition, edited the *Atlantic Monthly.* In 1868 the country was charmed by Louisa Alcott's *Little Women;* in 1880 it went wild over Lew Wallace's *Ben Hur* and bought a literal million copies; in 1883 it acclaimed James Whitcomb Riley's *The Old Swimmin' Hole;* in the year following *The Lady, or the Tiger?,* a short story by Frank Richard Stockton, was extravagantly greeted. Edward Bellamy with *Looking*

Backward in 1888 knew what it was to bask in the warmth of public esteem. Richard Harding Davis sent forth his *Stories for Boys* in 1891 and heard the nation's applause. A great wave of approbation rose to meet James Lane Allen's *Choir Invisible* in 1897. All the while Alger's books were coming, one after another, like the seasons—as inevitable and invariable—and selling best. For three decades he set the pace.

Go to the book stores today. Try to find books by Alger. Go to the libraries. Look along the shelves. Why are his books not found? Why do the stores not stock them—why have libraries barred them? Can millions of people have had a distorted vision or been utterly misguided? Can men who have grown fat and prosperous, and others who sit on judges' benches, and others who control the policies of American business and the politics of the nation—all have been wrong? Feverishly boys waited for Alger's books. Were they under a spell?

Why was Alger great?

The place of leaders depends at least as much on forces at work in the world as on qualities inherent in themselves. Alger's leadership issued, not from his own ability to gauge the public taste and demand but from the existence of that demand. The demand was latent. It awaited some one to fill it. Alger wrote *Ragged Dick,* almost by accident. But it met the demand.

In the early seventies the United States entered on a

new era. An era to which could have been applied the title of one of Alger's books—an era of Wait and Hope. "Literature is at a standstill in America, paralyzed by the Civil War," wrote Stedman in 1864. Later he supplemented this: "For ten years the new generation read nothing but newspapers." Both observations were true. The Civil War was followed by a period of literary stagnation. Nobody wrote anything that amounted to anything. The war made people forget to write. Besides, the country was more concerned with living—with finding means for healing still bloody sores—than with writing. What was a story about negroes worth compared with an answer to "Now that the negroes are free, what shall we do with them?" Confederate soldiers had plantations to restore. Union soldiers had farms to restore. Clerks had to look for jobs. Men had no time for books. Only a few books, therefore, were written.

The United States as a nation was concerned with finding a way out of its poverty, with restabilizing its finances. The Treasury, needing credit, could borrow. It could levy taxes. The man in the street, needing bread, could not borrow. He could not levy taxes. He had to work, or starve. In the war the preservation of the Union had been the goal of the Northerner, the preservation of States' rights the goal of the Southerner. Now the goal of both was the preservation of self. The crusade gave way to a battle for life. Ideals were forgotten. They could be fought for and died for, but not eaten.

Men wanted money. When men have wealth and seek more, money becomes a god. When they are destitute and seek money, money becomes the god of gods. Everybody scrambled for money. Some got it and some didn't. Those who got it kept it. Those who couldn't get it wanted it more than ever. Making money, a little of it or a lot of it, was the average American's day in and day out occupation.

Brighter men, shrewder men, made fortunes. Starting with nothing, they amassed great stores of wealth. The poor man looked at the rich man and said, "If he made it, why can't I?" But though the rich got richer the poor did not get poorer. In time the country caught its financial breath. The economic situation cleared somewhat. More men took hold, financially, and inspired those less fortunate.

"If he made it, why can't I?"

If Ragged Dick did it——.

Ragged Dick. If *he* could come to wear fine clothes——.

All of Horatio Alger's heroes started poor and ended up well-to-do. All of them were in search of money. Everybody could understand their motives. Therein is the main reason for Alger's literary leadership for thirty years.

There were other reasons.

Time was precious. The longer people worked, the more money they made. There was no eight-hour day.

Labor unions did not count for much. The less time people frittered away, the more time they had for Getting Somewhere. Boys were not allowed to read about Double Dan, the Dastard, or Nick Carter, or Deadwood Dick. Some parents said they were bad books. They were not bad books. They were uneconomic books. They had nothing to do with money-making. When boys wanted to read, they were told to read what would be entertaining and inspiring at the same time. They were told to read Alger. What usually does not happen in such cases happened in this case. The boys liked him.

Before 1891 a man in America could write a book—an excellent book—and not be assured of a publisher. The lowest laborer found for his services a better market than the budding author. Employers couldn't get labor for nothing but publishers could get books for nothing. They kept an eye on books in England and stole those that seemed likely to succeed. It was not considered stealing then because there was no international copyright law. Publishers in America could adopt what foreign books they liked and print and sell them without giving royalties to the authors. That saved them a great deal of money and they found it good business to ignore American authors.

The absence of the copyright law prior to 1891 gave Alger less competition. Of course foreign books were published here. But they didn't deal with the American

scene and had practically nothing to do with making money.

"All at once," observes Fred Lewis Pattee, in *A History of American Literature Since 1870,* "America found that she was full of materials for fiction." Mr. Pattee points out that American authors came to "see our own life in its real significance", and that the American reader came to realize there could be more drama, and more verifiable truth, in the lives of his own neighbors, than in romances of English nobility.

By the time American authors took advantage of what Mr. Pattee says they came to realize, and got their books published, Mr. Alger had a tremendous head-start. It was precisely about verifiable truths he had been writing. Alger represented the real beginning of realism in American fiction.

Hostility between North and South began to diminish. New railroads, more newspapers, better mail service, longer roads, a more extensive telegraph system, brought East and West closer together. A more pronounced sense of unity invaded the public consciousness. A sense of oneness, United Statesness. A national pride developed, a national conceit. There were two outlets at which this surge of self-appreciation manifested itself. One was the World's Fair, held at Chicago in 1893. The other was the Spanish-American war.

It meant something to be an American, to live in the

land of opportunity. It was considered a privilege and an honor to belong to a nation that paid no more attention to silver-spoon-in-the-mouth babies than to Al Smiths. It was the land of freedom and equality for all, in which the highest place was not inaccessible to the meanest born. Rail splitters could become president. Fords and Rosenwalds and Vanderlips could become Leading Citizens.

All of which Alger had been writing about.

From time immemorial parents have believed that children's minds must be moulded, and literature has been presumed to play an important part in the process. In days when chivalry was more rampant than it is now, boys were reared on stories that dealt with Real Heroes. The Heroes Girded on Armor and Went Forth to Do Battle with Dragons. Having slain the dragons, they returned to the king's palace and Married the Youngest Princess. In a more practical age, when it became more necessary to slay the Wolf at the Door, boys were fed on books with utilitarian themes.

Alger's heroes never slew dragons. But they lifted mortgages.

His first publisher, A. K. Loring, proclaimed the immortality of his books. "Alger," he averred, "is the dominating figure of the new era. In his books he has captured the spirit of reborn America. The turmoil of city streets is in them. You can hear the rattle of pails on the farms. Above all you can hear the cry of tri-

umph of the oppressed over the oppressor. Of no country but the United States," further averred Mr. Loring, "could such stories be written and accounted true. Here, where there is no caste, they happen every day. What Alger has done is to portray the soul—the ambitious soul—of the country. He is outstanding today because he is the first to record lives with which we are all familiar. In centuries to come he will be outstanding because he was the first to record, in the fiction form, the narratives of every-day life."

Loring was not entirely a fool. Before any other publisher, he realized the salability of Alger's books and through them made a fortune.

Frank A. Munsey, carried away by the prevailing popularity which Alger enjoyed, said of the author: "To a greater extent than any other man he knows that men want to read about themselves. No one has been able to approach him in ability to depict the life of the downtrodden. He has a grip on his readers which no one will be able to loosen. It is not unlikely that he will go down in literary history as the greatest literary figure of his time."

Later on Mr. Munsey was less optimistic. Heeding not so much what the man in the street said—scrutinizing Alger's work with a maturer mind and a more critical eye—he concluded that Alger was but a passing phase, more highly rated than he should have been "because his style is crude and he lacks depth of imagination". Conceding (in his own *Munsey's Magazine,* in 1892) "flashes of naïve and genuine humor", he sensed

a lack of structural cohesion when he continued with, "Mr. Alger chooses an incident for opening a story and at once begins work upon it without regard to further chapters."

Hordes of men have written in praise of Horatio Alger, a few in disparagement. Of all of them, one man touched upon the truth and formed what seems an accurate estimate of his work. Harold M. Harvey, in a feature article published in the New York *Tribune* on January 28, 1917, said:

"Horatio Alger wrote of New York when city lots on 45th Street near Fifth Avenue were selling for $440 and Central Park was a dumping ground. In his stories of newsboy life he has preserved New York of the late Fifties with the descriptive detail of a Baedeker. . . . Faithfully he describes the city as it was then, going into details of architecture long since destroyed, locations remembered only by a few, and customs obsolete for 40 years, with all the elaborate care of a guide book. . . . If for no other reason, Horatio Alger, Jr. should find his niche in American literature because he has preserved the New York of their fathers for the youths of the present day."

Had Mr. Harvey added that Alger deserves to be remembered because his popularity helps to explain the period in which he thrived, his critical estimate would have been, this biographer believes, perfect.

Clearer than anybody else, Horatio Alger realized the ephemeral quality of his books. "Times," he said,

"will change. Horse-cars will disappear. Boys no longer will black boots in the street. What I am describing will seem fantastic to coming generations. . . . Nobody will read them, even assuming they are well done.

"I should have let go. How many times I wanted to! Writing in the same vein becomes a habit, like sleeping on the right side. Try to sleep on the left side and the main purpose is defeated—one stays awake."

Though men like to say, "Yes, I read Horatio Alger —I read every book he ever wrote", it is likely that no man ever read all his books. A complete list includes a total of one hundred and nineteen. Besides, he was author of hundreds of articles and poems which appeared in magazines.

Each book bound him closer to the mediocrity he sought to avoid. Each book made it less possible for him to accomplish the ambition of his life. It seems pitiful that a man should have hoped so ardently and so long to turn out a masterpiece, and not been rewarded. The spectacle might be distressing; except that there is something glorious in his unending hope, something heroic and magnificent. As the years rolled on and as the list grew longer, he was more and more moody. "I suppose I should have married," he could not help but say. "A man cannot go tramping over the earth forever, alone. He must plant roots which will spring to life—bring forth blossoms and comfort him."

Neither sadness nor moodiness discouraged him

wholly. By every means within his power he attempted to remedy his shortcomings as he saw them. To acquire a style he memorized passages from other books and recited them to himself. Henry James he accepted as a master stylist. He did realize the importance of style. What he did not realize was that, though he might master style, he could not conquer the absence of imagination or originality in thinking.

Frustrated in other directions, he kept on writing books for boys. How the list grew! Sometimes he wrote two books at a time and not infrequently got his characters mixed. Luke Larkin jumped into chapters that belonged to Luke Walton. Grant Thornton left Chapter IX of *Helping Himself* in order to thrash the bully, Jim Smith, in Chapter XIII of *Hector's Inheritance*. Tactfully the publishers set him straight. Sometimes the publishers were compelled to write him for overdue installments and sometimes in reply received instructions like this: "Please destroy all manuscript on hand for *The Highest Rung* as I have decided not to go ahead with it. I am forwarding you instead opening chapters of *Frank and Fearless.*" It was quite all right for him to upset the publishers' plans by such abrupt and inexplicable antics, but if the publishers in any way interfered with him he was frantic. Having lost a portion of his manuscript for *Do and Dare,* they apologetically explained the situation. He threatened to break his contract.

Still, the publishers got out of him what they wanted, usually by playing upon his vanity. At their request

he finished a life of Garfield, *From Canal Boy to President,* in thirteen days, that they might issue it in the same year in which Garfield died. They induced him to vary the locale of his stories, particularly getting him to do a story now and then with Chicago instead of New York for its background.

Worried by Alger's carelessness, the publishers took exceptional pains to check his manuscripts. Their vigilance eliminated glaring inaccuracies but could not extend to less important ones. As a result, correspondence came in continually to remind Horatio that he was less than perfect. Peter Brush, a hunter who appears in *Tom Thatcher's Fortune,* saves Tom Thatcher with a rifle in Chapter XXVI. In the ensuing chapter the rifle is transformed into a revolver. Bright young readers would have none of this. They wanted to know which weapon actually was used.

Considerable objection was raised to another part of the same story. Lycurgus B. Spooner, M.D., is a victim of the Indians—a living victim; he goes right on living even though his scalp has been removed.

"How was it you did not die?" asked Tom.

"The confounded redskins thought I was dead, and left me lying on the prairie. But I was not so far gone as they supposed. After a while I came to, and a party of travelers coming up took care of me. I recovered after a time and tried to make up for my loss by a wig. . . ."

"And how do you get along without a scalp?" asked Peter Brush curiously.



Which of these did you read?

"Don't miss it," answered Spooner laconically. "I used to have headaches, but now I never have 'em."

Old Jacob, on page twelve of *Tom, the Bootblack,* is sixty-five years old. Twenty-one pages further on he is sixty-two.

Once started, Alger could, if he chose, write like a fury. His speed was astounding. With plenty of coffee to keep him awake, he could write for ten hours at a time. Very likely he would not write again for several days, but then would come another ungodly stretch of labor. His plots, despite what Munsey said, were outlined in advance. It is true the outlines did not consist of much—chiefly the names of the characters, where and how they were to meet, and the occupation of each.

Narrating the life of Garfield was an uninteresting task to Alger, quite different from his feeling about Daniel Webster. His story of the latter, *From Farm Boy to Senator,* he enjoyed doing and it is the longest of all he wrote. As a boy he had been impressed with the greatness of Daniel Webster. The latter's orations were calculated to stir the hearts of boys as well as men, and when the man died in Massachusetts, in the year in which Alger was graduated from Harvard, Alger felt, like John Fiske, that "a god-like presence had gone" and that life was somehow "smaller, lonelier and meaner". Horatio knew by heart some of Webster's speeches. Parts of them he declaimed for the boys of the lodging house, and this was his favorite passage:

"Secession! Peaceable secession! Sir, your eyes and

mine are never destined to see that miracle. The dismemberment of this vast country without convulsions! The breaking up of the fountains of the great deep without ruffling the surface! . . . Where is the line to be drawn? What States are to secede? What is to remain America? What am I to be? An American no longer? . . .

Alger had another favorite passage, along with millions of his compatriots. This, however, he could not repeat to the lodging house inmates. It was, in the first place, partisan. In the second place, he was already too feeble. It was the passage which helped William Jennings Bryan win the Democratic nomination for president. But if Alger could not recite it, at least he could write it. And many times he did:

"Having behind us the producing masses of this nation and the world, supported by the commercial interests, the laboring interests, and the toilers everywhere, we will answer their demand for a gold standard by saying to them—you shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."

Thus, with a method all his own, Horatio Alger, vicariously, managed to be great.

He intended to write a biography of Bryan but died too soon. Bryan would have liked it. There is some kinship between the extraordinary ambitions these two men had, and in their failures.

XIII
PATIENCE—THE NAME OF A VIRTUE

For a year after O'Connor's death Horatio hid himself away. When he returned to the lodging house it was to find another administration firmly entrenched. And already there were many new boys there. The boys he had known best had moved on. Half-heartedly he tried to interest himself in the institution's affairs; but his spirit was gone. He sensed an antagonism which actually did not exist, felt that the new superintendent, Theodore Heig, resented his presence. The few boys he still cared for he arranged to meet outside the lodging house, taking them to dinner with him, and sometimes to his rooms, to chat. He turned over in his mind the prospect of a rival lodging house, and mentioned it to the boys. Heig heard of it and, regretting Alger's disaffection, made efforts to have him resume his old place. Then, with renewed enthusiasm, Alger resumed. . . .

But lodging houses are only stopping-off places. With the seasons the boys come and go. And, with their multitude of interests, boys forget. Their minds go forward, they are too young to cherish memories.

They rush forth to meet the battles of another day, to taste its joys and sorrows. A lodging house is merely a shelter for the night, a roost for aching limbs which sleep will refresh and restore to vigor. The course of life runs from the unsettled to the settled, the tendency is from the temporary to the permanent. A lodging house is only a makeshift. Its inmates do not get old in its sight, but move on and away, toward homes. And soon Horatio Alger was a stranger to all the boys, and they were strangers to him.

Despite Heig's friendliness, he was not and could not be O'Connor. So Alger found other things to do. He travelled several times to Cambridge, trying there to bring back the image of Patience Stires. He hovered near the buildings which are Harvard, and found that he loved them; but he wept to think that Harvard would remember him, not as an author, but as the smallest boy in the class of '52 and the first to have his name recorded in the first Harvard year-book. He was miserable when he mused on the world's forgetfulness. But he would have been happy had he been able to foresee the glowing accounts of him which newspapers printed on the day he died.

He entered upon new crusades: visited factories where children were employed and threatened to expose the conditions under which they labored; supported Anthony Comstock in his attacks on vice. But these activities which took him away from the lodging house were failures. Invariably he went back, to sit in a corner, with folded hands, silent with his reflections. Grown

suddenly old, he dwelt in the midst of the far away. Inwardly, at times, a panic swept over him as he contemplated his loneliness and approaching death. A paralyzing fear clutched at his heart sometimes, as he contemplated his end, the disappearance of his name, with no son to carry it on. The sorrows that assailed him made him think of the village in which his mother lay buried, and upon him stole a longing to be buried near her. Now and then his sister, Mrs. Amos Cheney, wrote to him from that New England village, asking him to come and end his days there, in the house of which she was mistress.

The war with Spain began on April 23, 1898, and that day marked Horatio's last appearance at the lodging house. He was scarcely noticed as he adjusted his clothes and turned to go. The tumult in the rooms was deafening. With so extraordinary an event as a war to be discussed it is not to be wondered at that Alger's mere leave-taking—an every-day occurrence—attracted no attention. Yet this was a final leave-taking, a last good-by. A little fellow, mindful of past kindnesses, ran ahead and held open the door. By train, an hour later, Horatio set out for Massachusetts, for the tiny township called South Natick.

Along the banks of the Charles River he strolled, and sometimes lounged about Bailey's Hotel. He sauntered along streets on which John Eliot had performed his apostolic labors among the Indians. He rested beneath the oak under whose branches Eliot had taught the

Indians to pray. He studied houses of which Harriet Beecher Stowe had written in *Old Town Folks.* He passed and repassed the spot where the local library stands, the library which, with a full measure of loyalty, carries his books on its shelves to this day. The local historical museum is in the basement of the library building, and in one of its glass cases Horatio's picture lies, gazed upon by stuffed birds, surrounded by musty parchments, guarded by rifles which blazed at Britishers in the Revolution and which now hang from the ceiling. Old New England chairs, which no one dares to sit on, are there, and baskets woven by ancient tribes. And his father's picture is there, framed, and looks down at him from its high eminence upon the wall.

A doctor came to see him when he coughed, and ordered him to stay indoors. But Alger continued his ramblings, and coughed more. And now and then, when his heart seemed ready to burst with pain, he would sink down upon the ground and wait until a neighbor came and helped him home. All the patent medicines he could buy, he bought. But the cough and the heart pains abated not at all.

Confined at last, he wished to have his room resemble as closely as possible the room he had had in New York. He sent for his old, soft carpet, and set up on a mantle his miniature bust of Shakespeare. For placement next to his bed he bought a desk; and secured reams of paper and many pencils—toward which, as a dying gesture, he stretched his hand. Copies of all the books he wrote were lined up on shelves, but their tenancy was not long.

Occasionally he glanced through them, and grimaced. *A New York Boy* was the last of his own books which he held in his hands. In that volume he came across the passage in which Leonard Wilton, villain, is confronted by Rufe Rodman, hero. "Confusion!" he muttered. "How comes that kid here?" After that, Alger had all the books carried from his room. He tried very hard to forget.

Old friends of the family visited him. To all he was mild mannered and courteous. But it was plain he wanted to be left alone.

His sister, an ardent researcher for New England historical societies, attempted to interest him in her work. She, too, soon left him to his own devices.

Frank Hoppe, who had been his secretary, made a special journey from Boston to see him. Remembering days gone by and not expecting a cordial welcome, Hoppe planned to extend his good wishes and depart. He was astonished to receive a hearty greeting and an invitation to remain for several days. He stayed over, to find that Alger wished to reëngage him. "Very soon," Horatio said, "I shall be ready to get on some work I have long had in mind. But I am too weak to accomplish much alone. I will need an assistant. . . ."

From his window the next afternoon Alger waved a reluctant farewell to Hoppe.

Given strength—a little more strength and a little more time—he would again have tried his hand at the masterpiece. He leaned back on his pillows, waiting.

Patience was all he needed—ability to wait, to get well. And he waited, promising himself, and the world through himself, great things.

But those were the promises of a broken, dying man.

Word of his serious illness got through to New York. And Theodore Heig drew up a resolution, had it signed by one hundred and forty-nine newsboys, and rode to South Natick to hand it to Horatio Alger. If there was any crowning glory to Horatio's life, that was it. To think the newsboys remembered. . . .

Heig remained but a few hours, but the conversation he had was intimate and revealing. When Alger expressed his regret at having no son, Heig told him he had more sons than any man in the world. He spoke of Alger's great family of street waifs. . . .

Horatio liked that thought and played with it. His great family of street waifs! All his Pauls and Toms and Franks. The very children he had been disowning! They were his flesh and blood. What if they were not the heroes he had longed for? Were they on that account less his own?

He had memorized a passage from *The Little Lame Prince*, which he considered the most beautiful book ever written for children. And Alger himself became Prince Dolor, who "lifted his thin, slender hand, and there came a silence over the vast crowd immediately". And all his bootblacks and newsies and telegraph boys were assembled before him as he said, "Yes, I must go. It is time for me to go. Remember me sometimes, my people, for

I have loved you well. And I am going a long way, and I do not think I shall come back any more."

It is worth noting that the little lame prince did not marry, either.

He was everyman, dying. Looking back on hopes unrealized and ambition thwarted. Trying, in darkest moments, to bring back the sparkling moments that had been. With difficulty, choosing them from here and there. The days at college, when he knew the girl Patience. The days when he had had Wing.

He was everyman, wanting life to live over again. As more and more he felt the world leaving him behind, galloping away, receding, flying on apace.

"Wait for me, world, and I will tell you a story."

It was July 18, 1899, and the Unitarian Church in South Natick was crowded. The townsfolk gathered early to pay last homage to their departed son. Rev. G. F. Pratt did nobly by his subject. After the services old men and women stood outside the church and murmured to each other in tones appropriately subdued. It was a long time before they dispersed. Those of them who had known Horatio formed separate groups, as though they were among the initiated and elect, destined on this day at least to rank higher than their fellows. Then, too, there was a question which among themselves they wished to answer. Occupying a pew in the rear of the church had been a stranger, a man whose identity none of them knew. Quietly he had appeared,

and now, as quietly, he was about to go away. One of the townsfolk approached him.

"May I ask if you were acquainted with Mr. Alger?"

"I knew him well," the stranger replied, and he seemed an old, a very old man. "I knew him better than you. I published his first book."

"Are you Mr. Loring?"

"Yes, I am Mr. Loring."

The newsboys in the lodging house in New York gave a minstrel show that night.

BOOKS WRITTEN BY HORATIO ALGER, JR.

Driven from Home
A Cousin's Conspiracy
Ned Newton
Andy Gordon
Tony, the Tramp
The Five Hundred Dollar Check
Helping Himself
Making His Way
Try and Trust
Only an Irish Boy
Jed, the Poorhouse Boy
Chester Rand
Grit, the Young Boatman of Pine Point
Joe's Luck
From Farm Boy to Senator
The Young Outlaw
Jack's Ward
Dean Dunham
In a New World
Both Sides of the Continent
The Store Boy
Slow and Sure
Walter Sherwood's Probation
The Trials and Triumphs of Mark Mason
The Young Salesman
Andy Grant's Pluck
Facing the World
Luke Walton
Strive and Succeed
From Canal Boy to President
The Erie Train Boy
Paul, the Peddler
The Young Miner
Charlie Codman's Cruise
A Debt of Honor
The Young Explorer
Ben's Nugget
The Errand Boy
Frank and Fearless
Frank Hunter's Peril
Adrift in the City

Tom Thatcher's Fortune
Tom Turner's Legacy
Dan, the Newsboy
Digging for Gold
Lester's Luck
Brave and Bold
A New York Boy
Bob Burton
The Young Adventurer
Julius, the Street Boy
Adrift in New York
Tom Brace
Struggling Upward
The Adventures of a New York Telegraph Boy
Tom Tracy
The Young Acrobat
Bound to Rise
Hector's Inheritance
Do and Dare
The Tin Box
Tom, the Bootblack
Risen from the Ranks
Shifting for Himself
Wait and Hope
Sam's Chance
Striving for Fortune
Phil, the Fiddler
Paul Prescott's Charge
Mark Manning's Mission
Rupert's Ambition
Sink or Swim
The Backwoods Boy
Tom Temple's Career
Ben Bruce
The Young Musician
The Telegraph Boy
Work and Win
The Train Boy
The Cash Boy
Herbert Carter's Legacy
Strong and Steady
Lost at Sea
From Farm to Fortune
Young Captain Jack
Joe, the Hotel Boy
Out for Business
Falling in with Fortune
Nelson, the Newsboy
Randy of the River
Jerry, the Backwoods Boy
Ben Logan's Triumph
The Young Book Agent
Luck and Pluck
Ragged Dick
Fame and Fortune
The Young Entertainer
Sandy Stone
Ben Barton's Battle
The Last Word
Tom Turner
Plan and Prosper
Cal Cooper's Triumph
Mark, the Match Boy
In Search of Treasure
Frank Starr's Purpose
Up the Ladder
Hobart, the Hired Boy
Ben, the Luggage Boy
Rufus and Rose

Books Written by Horatio Alger, Jr.

Rough and Ready
Ned Nestor's Plan
The Young Soldier
Toward the Top
Dean Dexter
Frank's Campaign
Bernard Brook's Adventures
Robert Coverdale's Struggles
The Making of a Man

This list of books by Horatio Alger, Jr., may not be complete. But it includes all his books which, over a period of two years, I have been able to locate. That there are more, I doubt; that there may be more, is possible. It should be understood, also, that this list does not include many long stories written by Alger for magazines—stories which were not later issued in book form.

H. R. M.

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